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IMMEDIATE REVELATION :

BEING

A BRIEF VIEW

OF THE

DEALINGS OF GOD WITH MAN
IN ALL AGES.

SHOWING THE

UNIVERSAL AND IMMEDIATE AGENCY OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT UNDER DIFFERENT DISPENSATIONS;

AND THAT

The Christian

IS ESPECIALLY AUTHORISED TO EXPECT

IMMEDIATE COMMUNICATIONS OF
THE DIVINE WILL.

"No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the
Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."—MATT. xl. 27.

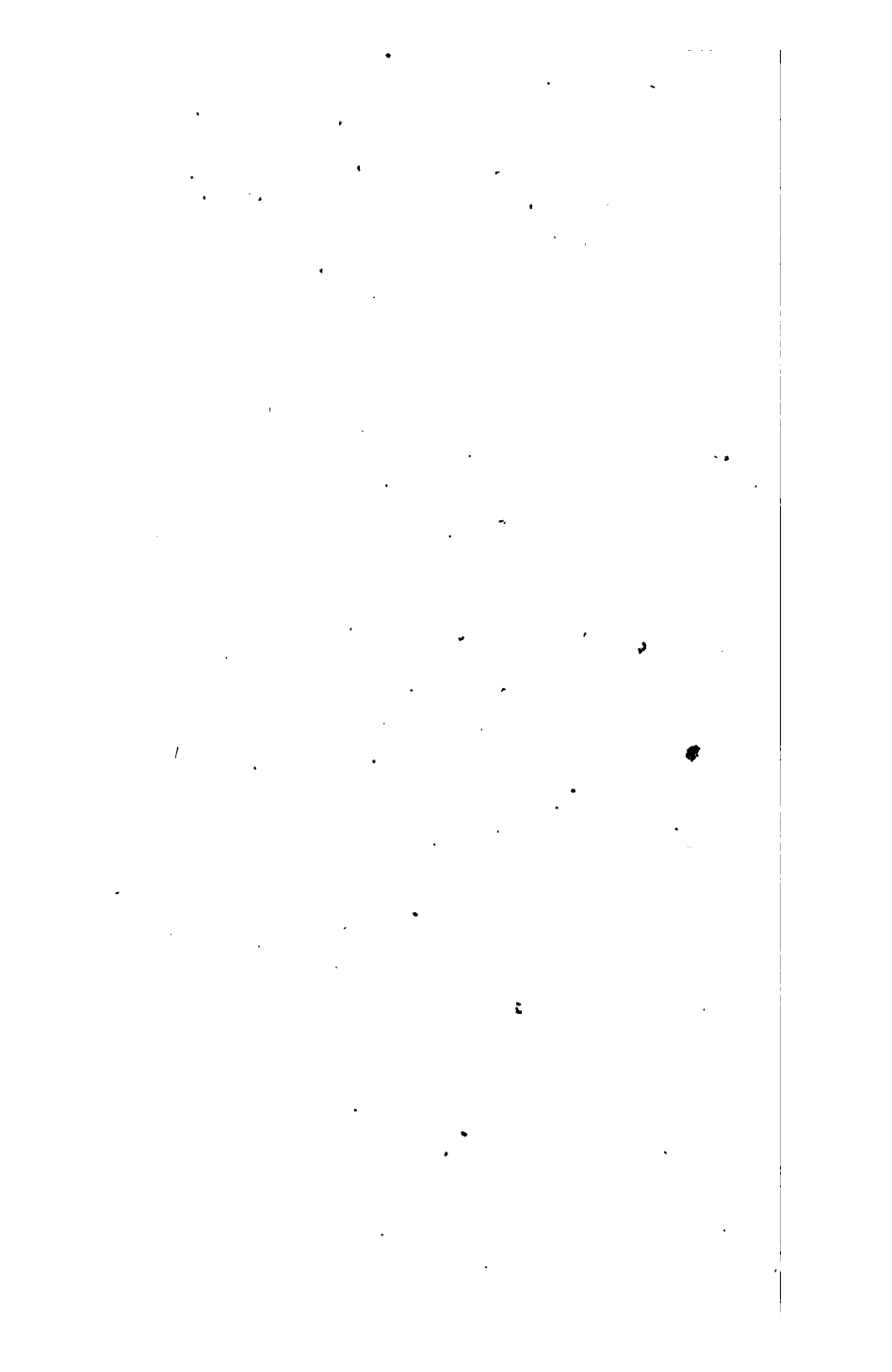
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IMMEDIATE REVELATION, &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE STATE OF THE NATURAL MAN.—THE WORK OF SALVATION.—UNIVERSAL OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

SPECULATIVE inquiries, respecting the original perfection of man, and into the causes which destroyed it, and impressed on the soul imperfection in its stead, are seldom productive of benefit: on the contrary, they tend to render obscure and dubious that which is self-evident and certain. No further remark, therefore, will be made on this subject than that the image of God, in which, the Holy Scriptures inform us, man was created,¹ could only consist with "righteousness and true holiness."² But although speculation respecting these things is of no practical importance, few doctrines are more so than the state of the natural man. Soon after his creation, man was placed in a situation of trial. The penalty attached to his disobedience was stated in the following words:—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."³ This passage clearly declares that death should be the *sure* and *immediate* consequence of transgression. Taking then its simple meaning, there will be no diffi-

¹ Gen. i. 27.

² Compare Ephes. iv. 23, 24; Coloss. iii. 10.

³ Gen. ii. 17.

culty in deciding that the death alluded to does not signify "a becoming subject to all the evils of mortality."¹ It is readily admitted that evil would not have been attached to man's mortality, had he abode in the counsel and way of his Maker; but whilst, on the one hand, we have no reason for supposing that the body of man would have been immortal if he had continued sinless, on the other, it is very evident that the death, which was the immediate consequence of his transgression, was a *spiritual* death. The Holy Scriptures bear abundant testimony to the truth of this position. In them the nature of man is spoken of in terms the most expressive of his degradation. According to them he is "*dead* in trespasses and sins;"² and the apostle very clearly states that this death is universal in the following passage:—"We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were *all dead*."³ But in a more particular manner in another place, when, contrasting the blessings which come by Jesus Christ with the evils entailed on the human family by the transgression of the first man, he says, "by one man's offence *death reigned* by one;" and further on, "as sin hath reigned *in the death*."⁴ It is very evident that the apostle does not mean to say that sin "*reigned unto death*," or its production, as our translators appear to have thought; but that as an inward and spiritual death reigned by the offence of one, so sin got into dominion and reigned also with it.

¹ Hewlett.² Eph. ii. 1.³ 2 Cor. v. 15.⁴ Εν τῷ θανάτῳ.⁵ Rom. v. 18, 21.

Adam then died, in a *spiritual* sense, *in the day* of his sin. His spiritual ear was closed, his spiritual eye was blinded, his spiritual senses were benumbed, and his whole soul was alienated from God. It is not meant that man's soul was deprived of actual vitality, but that it became dead to God,—dead to righteousness,—dead to a capacity of perceiving or knowing the truth. It does not appear that man's mental powers were immediately affected, or that his physical resources became directly diminished by transgression, although both are remotely influenced and debilitated by it. The death was a moral death, and pre-eminently consisted in the alienation of the affections from God and his truth, and the perversion of the will towards created things; and with the moral feelings, the moral *perceptions* necessarily became affected, and physical disease and mental imbecility rapidly followed as consequences of the moral evil. 'Th'is "death hath passed on all men:"¹—"all are under sin;"² and all, in their natural state, have their eyes closed to the Light of the spiritual world, by which Light alone they can be quickened to a perception of the "things of the Spirit of God."³ Such is the testimony of the Holy Scriptures to the corruption of the human heart. But the consequences of that corruption are so universally manifest that even without the testimony of these records we should not want abundant evidence to prove that the image of God, in which man was originally created, is not now impressed on his soul in his natural state. Ac-

¹ Rom. v. 12.² Rom. iii. 9.³ 2 Cor. ii. 11.

cumulated misery arising from accumulated transgression presses itself on the view in every direction, and is sufficient to wrest from the minds even of such as would disregard the testimony of Holy Writ the acknowledgment that man is a fallen creature. Whether we regard him, in his highest character, as a responsible and moral agent, or whether we look on him as a mere animal, we are obliged to admit that both the physical and moral laws, which God ordained, have been and are violated in him.

We do not see throughout the works of nature great means provided without producing a correspondingly great result; but in man we may observe the noblest faculties paralyzed, and the greatest mental powers lost in torpidity or aberration. Every eye can perceive the physical evils. But the enlightened mind sees in the moral world a greater disease than that which prostrates the animal powers. In the physical world we may see a partial disorder; in the moral economy the disease is without limit. In governments, in legislative and judicial enactments, in mercantile pursuits, and in individual conduct, another influence may be observed to operate than the unbending principle of moral rectitude. The mechanic avails himself of the known laws of the natural world; for he is aware that no machine can be serviceable if opposed in its construction to the principles which govern in the material universe. Because men have not acted with a similar wisdom in their political movements, and have not been concerned to found their code on God's moral law, the machinery of their institutions

has been in continual disorder. By dint of human intellect nations have risen into power, and have for a season swayed an unrighteous sceptre over a conquered world, but their government not being that of holiness, nor their unity based on moral rectitude, the Lord has caused their grandeur to cease and a stain to rest upon their glory, so that they are now known only on the page of history. The grasping of nations,—what is called national heroism,—national pride and national contention, be it remembered, only indicate the state and acts of a collective body of *individuals*. The deeds of nations are characteristic of their people. Their history, the mournful accounts of their depravity, and their rebellion against all the kindlier feelings of our nature, as well as their trampling on righteousness and their contempt of truth, is only a history of the *human heart*; and it proclaims in the clearest language,—yea, clearer than language can declare,—that men, the whole human family, are “dead in trespasses and sins,”¹ “alienated from the life of God,”² and “enemies”³ to His righteousness and government: and thus it affords a practical illustration of the doctrines of Holy Writ. For this state of things could only result from an inherent corruption in man’s *nature*; something must be wrong in the *root*. “As the good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can the corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”⁴

The Scriptures of truth mention as a consequence of

¹ Eph. ii. 3.

³ Coloss. i. 21; Rom. viii. 7.

² Eph. iv. 18.

⁴ Matt. vii. 18.

the fall, not only sin, but also ignorance,—not only a spiritual rebellion, but also a spiritual blindness. They declare that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither *can* he *know* them, because they are spiritually discerned.”¹ The apostle here speaks of a state of mind very different from mere aversion from what is good; he alludes to an *incapacity* in the human mind of knowing the things of God, even if that aversion did not exist. Man is wise in the things of time, but is utterly ignorant of those things which relate to the spiritual government and kingdom of God. Allowing, then, that man’s nature is now essentially evil, where are we to look for a remedy? Nothing can be seen in the working of the human mind which seems likely, or even possible, to act as a remedial agent: his nature being radically corrupt, every action must tend to corruption; and as every act of evil strengthens the evil principle, so the working of man’s disordered nature can only produce greater confusion. Philanthropy, generosity, benevolence, and other qualities of a similar character, may manifest themselves in a man’s conduct, and yet the worm of moral evil be preying on his life, and he be serving something very different from Him, who alone is worthy of our adoration. And the natural man may be able to discover by his unaided reason *the grounds* on which rests the authority of Holy Writ, and he may from it, by the same power, work out a *system of truth*; he may be scriptural and spiritual

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

in his creed, but unless the Divine Spirit shines into his soul and quickens it, the truths, which he can so ably defend, are not practically known, but are still foolishness and an offence to his carnal mind; and whilst intimately acquainted with the true doctrine of the Gospel he will be ignorant of its faith, unless actuated by its spirit.

By transgression, therefore, man made himself obnoxious to punishment, and placed himself in a condition of misery from which he could not liberate himself by his own exertions. But the mercy of God averted the dreadful consequence of sin, and as He pronounced a curse on it, He, in infinite love, promised a Saviour. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, but thou shalt bruise his heel."¹ However opinions may vary as to the instrument in the temptation, it will be universally admitted that the real tempter was Satan. The seed of the woman² applies pre-eminently to the Lord Jesus,—the Eternal Word of God "made flesh,"³—and has a special allusion to his conception and birth of a virgin; and bruising the serpent's head seems to have a direct reference to the victory obtained by the Lord Jesus Christ over Satan, when, having spoiled principalities and powers, "He ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."⁴

As "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,"⁵ the

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

² Gal. x. 4; Matt. i. 23.

³ John, i. 14; Heb. ii. 16.

⁴ Eph. iv. 8.

⁵ Acts, iv. 12.

benefits, which accrue from the great propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, necessarily had a retrospective as well as a prospective application to the human race. And as the promise of a Saviour accompanied the denunciation of the curse, so the work of salvation commenced as soon as it was needed, that is in *the day of transgression*. That same Eternal Word, who in the fulness of times took flesh and dwelt among men, and by whom all things were created, immediately began to remedy the evil, which man had introduced into his nature by sin. And for this purpose it is evident that the Lord must work where Satan was working, and that Satan's head must be bruised where it was raised. When Satan had led man by subtlety into transgression, he triumphed in him,—his head was there raised, his power there dominant. In man—in the heart and mind of man—Satan set up his throne, and therefore here was the power of the Eternal Word required, and here it was immediately exerted.

It is clear from the Scriptures, that in all ages, every religion, of which God was the author, has had reference, in general, to sin in the creature, and to the need of a Redeemer and Saviour. The sacrifices, which at a very early period were appointed to be made, were unmeaning rites unless they pointed to that "one Sacrifice"¹ for sin which was made by the Son of God. Men were taught, by the victim whose blood was poured out on the altar of the Lord, that death was the penalty of sin, and that the life must be sacrificed to God. The sacrifice

¹ Heb. x. 12.

without this was a vain offering; but even a knowledge of that to which the sacrifices pointed, was equally vain, unless accompanied by a state of mind which may be compared to an offering up of the soul, on a spiritual altar, in a spiritual temple, through a spiritual priest, to Him who required it.

Forthwith, then, He, (by whom man was created, and who in after ages offered Himself a sacrifice for sin,) in becoming the Saviour of man, "sat as a Refiner and Purifier"¹ of the soul. He had made it for His own dwelling;² but when it was polluted, He who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon iniquity,"³ could no longer dwell in it. But the love of God was still towards men, though fallen into sin and rebellion against Him: His purpose towards them was the same; because He changed not, they were not consumed.⁴ He, who had foreseen their fall, provided a remedy which should meet the utmost bounds of the exigency. Man stood in need not only of pardon but of *purgation*;—not only that one should die for him, but that one, stronger than "the strong man armed" who kept "the palace"⁵ of his heart, should live for him, live near him, live and work powerfully *in him*. It is particularly wished to draw the attention to this latter part of the work of salvation. It is the more important inasmuch as it is the present and immediate concern of every individual, and without which nothing that God has done or can do for man will be of any saving efficacy. Satan variously transforms

¹ Malachi, iii. 3.

² Isaiah, lvii. 15; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

³ Habak. i. 13.

⁴ Malachi, iii. 6.

⁵ Luke, xi. 22.

himself to hinder the setting up of the kingdom of Christ; and the natural mind being opposed to all restraint, and unwilling to come under Christ's yoke, is easily persuaded by the subtle enemy, when its rest has been destroyed by the "terrors of the Lord," to seek for a peace in something short of that "death unto sin"¹ and "life unto righteousness," which it was the purpose of Christ's coming in the flesh and suffering on the cross to effect.² Instead, therefore, of receiving Christ Jesus the Lord as a Regenerator and Sanctifier, as a Saviour of his people from their sins,³ and as "the power of God and the wisdom of God"⁴ working in the soul, the natural man attempts to build up for himself a hope of being eventually saved by notions of Christ as an outward Saviour, who without him has done all that is to be done. Thus historical ideas have too generally taken place of living faith and individual experience; and the precious blood of Christ, shed for the whole world, whilst verbally acknowledged is practically contemned, because they who reject Christ in that inward work—in the establishment of an inward kingdom in the soul, and as their real and not nominal Head and High-priest—are in the same spirit of opposition to Him as they were, who platted his crown of thorns, and pierced his hands and feet.

This inward work and its universality is particularly stated in these words of the apostle:—"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness

¹ Rom. vi. 2.

² 1 Pet. ii. 24.

³ Matt. i. 24.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 24.

comprehended it not.....That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."¹ As man was brought into a state of spiritual blindness by sin, and so became incapable of seeing or understanding the things of the Spirit of God, it was necessary, that his Creator should impart to him a measure of divine and spiritual light before he could be reinstated in the image of God and in the power of true righteousness. So that antecedently to any knowledge of history, an acquaintance with the nature of man and the will of God respecting him would have led us to expect a revelation, since without it man could know nothing of spiritual things. By the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit this revelation has been made: the life of the Eternal Word has been from the beginning a light to "lighten every man that cometh into the world." The gift of this light originated from the love of God towards man in his necessity, and the gift was universally bestowed because universally needed. As the spirit of evil was working everywhere, so the Spirit of God was given to work everywhere; as the serpent's head was raised in every heart, into every heart the light and power of the Eternal Word was sent to bruise it, that the kingdom of God might be again exalted over all.

This inward work is hidden from the eyes of man. The children of disobedience, who walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, are not sensible of the operations of that evil spirit which worketh in them,²

¹ John, i. 4, 5, 9.

² Eph. ii. 2.

and whilst under his power they do not seek the Lord, nor feel after Him who is not far from every one of us.¹ The secret operations both of the Spirit of Righteousness and of the Spirit of Darkness are unknown to the carnal mind; whilst the quickened soul is sensible only of the workings within itself, but cannot take cognizance of what is going on in the souls of others, except from the effects manifested in the external conduct. So that although the testimony of Holy Writ, when speaking of the human family, is, "There is none that doeth good, no not one,"² yet we have not hence sufficient grounds for denying that the Spirit of God has operated in every heart to "turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." For whilst they bear this testimony, they also clearly set forth the universal agency of the Spirit of God. To the unbelieving they apply this query, "Doth not Wisdom cry, and Understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of the high places, by the way of the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors. Unto you, O men, I cry; and my voice is to the sons of men."³ In this figurative, but striking language did the inspired penman declare the universal operation of the Divine Wisdom or Word of God, whose life is the light of men. They who received Him, as manifested in this inward work, became his church; and although in various ages the Lord's true people have been concealed not only from the world, but often also one from the other, and have

¹ Acts, xvii. 27.² Rom. ix. 10.³ Prov. viii. 1-4.

been scattered here and there, known only to Him who sees and searches all hearts; yet from the earliest periods evidences have not been wanting to show, that He who created has neither forgotten nor ceased to visit the work of his hand.

Abel, Enoch, and Noah stand prominently forward among the early members of the militant church. Abraham, the friend of God and father of the faithful, was separated from his father's house, and led in a peculiar manner by the Holy Spirit, that from his posterity a people might be raised to receive the law, and to worship God in a way of his own appointing. The Lord also manifested himself unto Isaac,—appeared to Jacob at Bethel, and talked with him at Padan-aram,—and was with Joseph in Egypt. By a wonderful intervention of his power the Eternal One worked by these for his glorious name, that he might choose Israel to himself, a people to show forth his praise. The means, which his infinite wisdom saw fit to employ in effecting the fulfilment of his promises, were frequently opposed to the will and wisdom of man. Abraham walked by faith, and his posterity had frequently to travel by an unknown path, and in a way which they did not understand, but which was prepared for them by God. He either commanded them where to go, or led them by the force of external circumstances which they could neither control nor comprehend, until the end showed, that the Lord was working for Israel and for the consummation of his own will, as well when Jacob was complaining that all things

were against him,¹ and Joseph was a slave in Egypt, as when the former was returning home with two bands, and the latter was second only to Pharaoh.

The immediate agency of the Holy Spirit is exemplified not only in the history of the children of Abraham; but there were others scattered up and down in the midst of an idolatrous world, who were taught by God, who knew and worshipped Him; Melchisedek, king of Salem, was his priest, and Lot was a preacher of righteousness among the unrighteous inhabitants of Sodom. And when Hagar fled from Abraham's wife, the Lord appeared to her at Shur, and commanded her to return, and promised her a great posterity: and "she called the name of the Lord, that spake to her, Thou God seest me;"² thus simply and beautifully signifying her faith in the omniscience and superintending care of the Most High. And again, when at Sarah's request and the Lord's command Abraham had sent Hagar and Ishmael away, and after she had departed and wandered in the wilderness, and her water was spent, and she had so far forgotten the Lord's promise, that she left her child that she might not see him die, the Lord again appeared to her, showed her a well of water, and repeated his promises.³ And when the children of Israel were being brought into the land of Canaan, we hear of Balaam, a prophet of God, not of the seed of Abraham, who was known to the surrounding people, who, although they did not acknowledge the God,

¹ Gen. xlii. 46.

² Gen. xvi. 7, 14.

³ Gen. xxi. 9, 19.

by whose Spirit he was actuated, yet applied to him in a time of emergency as to a truth-speaking prophet.

But we are not to suppose that the Lord was known and acknowledged only by those few, who are mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as being subjects of divine revelation. On the contrary, it seems evident, that those only were named, who were so connected with the people of Israel as necessarily to form a part of their history. It is probable, that Melchisedek would not have been mentioned but on account of his having blessed Abraham, and because he was a type of the everlasting and unchanging priesthood of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Scriptures, however, declare in the most unequivocal language not only that many, both of the seed of Abraham and also of the Gentiles, were subjects of immediate revelation, but also that the agency of the Holy Spirit is universal. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them," said the apostle, "*for God hath shown it unto them.*" For the invisible things of Him from the foundation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God."¹ From which it is clear that from the beginning God has been with man in general, and manifested Himself to each in particular. The works of God have always been so shown unto men by the Holy Spirit working in

¹ Rom. i. 19, 21.

them as to render them *inexcusable* for that darkness of death and sin, which gathered upon the world until it became swallowed up by its iniquity. It was because they chose darkness that they were ignorant of the light, and enemies to it; it was because they rejected God and refused to glorify Him, that they perished for lack of knowledge, although He "left not Himself without witness,"¹ and was not far from every one of them.²

Created things could not convey to the unenlightened mind any knowledge of God, that would be savingly efficacious. Indeed the "things made" could testify only to the existence and power of God, and to His benevolence to a certain extent; but they could not instruct man in moral duties, nor make him acquainted with the duty and performance of Divine worship. The natural man might bow under an awful sense of an unknown power when he witnessed the manifestation of it in the creation; but this could not dispense with the necessity, nor supply the place of a power immediately proceeding from God, of which man stood in need, that he might be raised from the weakness and error of a fallen nature. He might perceive with undoubting certainty, that those things which surrounded him displayed the wisdom of an Almighty Being; but this knowledge would be useless, as regards his salvation, if he still remained unacquainted with his natural alienation from God and the means of restoration. So that whilst the Eternal Power and Godhead might be seen in the things

¹ Acts, xiv. 17.

² Acts, xvii. 17.

made, they alone could not render man inexcusable for not knowing God in his moral relations, and not worshipping him as the head of a spiritual kingdom. The external works would be of no avail without the internal manifestations. But what may be known of God was manifest in man, not merely his eternal power and Godhead, but his nature and law. It was manifest from the beginning by the universal Light, even by Him who was appointed to bruise the serpent's head and to destroy the kingdom of darkness. He, by whom God created all things, was the same as God appointed head of the spiritual world, that as by His own power He had caused the dark and confused elements of the earth to spring into order and beauty, so by the same power exerted in the souls of men He might sanctify and renew them, bring them to an everlasting righteousness, and give them an inheritance in another state of being. And this was the condemnation, *this it was* that rendered man *inexcusable*, that light *was come* into the world, and that they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.¹ Had He never come to them in the way of his Spirit and shined in the darkness of their hearts, that they might know Him, his truth and law, they had not had sin nor suffered condemnation.² But when "they knew God they glorified him not as God,"³ they "set at naught his counsel and would none of his reproof;"⁴ they refused to follow the Spirit of God and to be governed by him, therefore "God

¹ John, iii. 19.² Comp. John. xv. 22; Rom. iv. 15.³ Rom. i. 21.⁴ Prov. i. 23.

gave them over to a reprobate mind,"¹ and the spirit of evil became the rule of their life and actuated their conduct.²

And the doctrine of the universal agency of the Holy Spirit receives further corroboration from the heavy judgments, which have come from God, both on individuals and nations. These were at various times manifest in the destruction of Sodom, in the plagues of Egypt, in the destruction of Babylon, and in the overthrow of Tyre, because of the iniquity which abounded in them. And the nature of the testimonies, which the Lord put into the mouth of his ancient prophets to deliver against the idolatrous nations about Jerusalem, very frequently indicates, that he had striven with them in love before he pleaded with them in judgment. Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar stand prominently forward among the heathen kings, as individuals chosen by God to do his will and to work his work among the nations. The former appears to have been faithful from the beginning, and to have co-operated with God in bringing back his people Israel to the land of their fathers, in rebuilding Jerusalem, and re-establishing the legal ritual. The latter, however, was of a high mind, and had to bow very low beneath the rod of affliction before he could be brought to "bless the Most High, and to praise and honor Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation."³ And the history of Nineveh affords a memorable example of the Lord's pleading with the heathen,

¹ Rom. i. 28.

² Eph. ii. 2.

³ Daniel, iv. 34.

and of his turning from his anger when they turned from their iniquity, thus showing himself to be “a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and who repenteth Him of the evil.”¹

¹ Jonah, iv. 2.

CHAPTER II.

IMMEDIATE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUED AFTER THE GIVING OF THE LAW.

THE Lord evidently purposed by those revelations, which he made to men, to bring them out of that state of darkness and death into which sin had brought them, to gather all under the wing of Divine love, and to separate those, who were obedient to Him, from the rest of the world, that among them in a peculiar and pre-eminent manner His presence might dwell, His law be known, and a true worship be established. For this purpose Abraham was separated from his father's house, and he and his posterity preserved by a wonderful chain of providences in the midst of idolaters; and when they were becoming sufficiently numerous to be objects of jealousy to the surrounding nations, they were led into Egypt. Here after a season God raised up Moses to bring them from under the power of their enemies, and led them by a series of miraculous interpositions to Mount Sinai. Hitherto the revelations of God had been made to individuals, either for their own instruction and benefit, or to be orally communicated to others. But then God commanded Moses to write in a book. He accordingly wrote the law for the house of Israel, containing not only moral precepts, but the

ordinances of the legal worship in very minute description. This law as to its moral precepts was a transcript of the law written on the heart. Those precepts did not originate with the law of Moses, nor did the writing make them more obligatory than they were before. But man had corrupted himself, had closed his eyes to the light, had refused to acknowledge the Head of the spiritual and internal kingdom, and had turned his attention to things without him. Sin had disordered the originally perfect constitution of his soul, and the intuitive and unerring principles implanted in it had become obscured and uncertain, and man had sought a substitute in his own fallible reason, and was seeking for rest in external things. Then God in his mercy met man where he had wandered, and proclaimed to his outward ears, His own holy nature, law, requirements, and judgments.

When we consider this law, the miracles by which the people were led to the place whence it was given, the awful manner in which Jehovah declared it unto them, the purity and comprehensiveness of its moral precepts and the significance of its rites, we are almost constrained to admit, that could any outward law have been intended for the only rule of faith and practice and to supersede immediate revelations, that was particularly adapted for the purpose. But in giving a written law, it was not the will of God, that immediate revelation should cease, but that its reality should be established, and that men should be directed to a more perfect dispensation, when it should be known

in a greater measure. Immediate revelation did not arise from the law, but the law arose from immediate revelation. The law was not given, because of the insufficiency of immediate revelation, but immediate revelation was continued after the law was given, because the law alone was "weak through the flesh,"¹ and could not produce that change in man, which it was the will of God to effect. Neither when the law was written did it become an authority superior to the immediate commandments of God; who, although He had given a law to regulate the morals, and direct the worship of the people in general, yet reserved to Himself the direction of their affairs under peculiar circumstances, and continued to make His will known to them in an immediate manner respecting matters not found in the law, and which indeed no written volume could comprehend. The continuance of the Lord's presence and immediate teaching did not derogate from what was written, nor diminish the authority of the law. No fear of immediate revelation existed in the mind of Moses, lest a belief in it should nullify the law by causing men to think themselves liberated from its obligations, but when a young man ran unto him, and told him that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp and Joshua had requested him to forbid them, Moses gave this memorable answer, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God, that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them."²

¹ Romans, viii. 3.

² Numbers, xi. 27—29.

These immediate communications were continued after the death of Moses, and Joshua led on the armies of Israel in the name of the Lord, and received intimations of His will. Israel was the Lord's peculiar people, and He would be glorified by them, and have all the honour of subduing their enemies. They were to walk as he should direct, and confusion and vexation were consequent upon their neglect to ask His counsel. It appears that when by the mighty power of God alone the walls of Jericho had fallen, that Joshua sent men to Ai, to spy the country, and at their advice some of the people went against it. But "the accursed thing" was in the camp, and Joshua had not inquired of the Lord, therefore Israel fled before their enemies.¹ On another occasion the Israelites made peace with the inhabitants of Gibeon, so that those whom the Lord had commanded to be slain, were preserved among the people.² And when Moses and Joshua and the elders who had seen the wonderful works of the Lord in the wilderness were dead, another generation arose, which did not know the Lord, but worshipped Baalim and other gods of the people round about them: therefore the inhabitants of the land, which God had promised them, became the scourges of backsliding Israel, that by them the posterity of faithful Abraham might be turned to the obedience and worship of that God, who had been his keeper, guide, and instructor. And when the enemies of Israel had hardly oppressed them, they were made sensible of the truth, that as their

¹ Joshua, vii. 1—5.² Joshua, ix. 14, 15.

fathers did not obtain possession of the land by their own sword, so neither could their children retain it without the continued help of the Lord. This help He had promised them only as they kept themselves from the pollution of idols, and observed His law and testimonies. And when under a sense of this truth, they cried unto Him in the bitterness of their souls, He remembered His covenant with their fathers, and raised up men, by whose instrumentality He might work to break the power of their enemies and cause Israel, tribulated because of their transgressions, to dwell in peace.

Under the law a variety of means were appointed, by which the will of God might be ascertained. Jehovah's presence dwelt in a peculiar manner in the most holy place between the cherubim, whence He spake to the high-priest. But although it was written, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth,"¹ the people were not excluded from immediate communication with the Lord, but visions, dreams, and direct intimations from the Holy Spirit were appointed to teach individuals their particular duty. The house of Levi was appointed to minister in the holy things, and none of another tribe was permitted to do the office of priest. But the priests became corrupt, as well as the people, and were frequently the cause of their transgression. And when the Lord visited Israel, it was frequently, perhaps generally, by one not of Levi, but chosen from among the people. Thus although Gideon said

¹ Malac. ii. 7.

of himself: "Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house,"¹ yet the Lord chose him, that the people of Israel might be delivered by his instrumentality. There is something peculiarly instructive in the history of Gideon. We have not only an account of his being called and prepared by frequent revelations from God, but also of the operation of the Lord's power on others not of Israel. The Lord had told Gideon, by a multitude of signs, what His will was concerning him, and that He could save His people by few as well as by many, and by the weak as well as by the strong. But it appears, that a fear still existed in the mind of Gideon, so that the Lord sent him with his servant Phurah to the enemies' camp, where he heard one relate a dream, and another interpret it.² This revelation to the enemies of Israel was doubtless for Israel's sake and to strengthen the hands of Gideon. It is mentioned only to illustrate the truth, that after the law was given, excellent though it was in its moral code and perfect in its ritual observances, the Lord did not confine Himself to that as a medium for imparting his will, nor to the Urim and Thummim, nor to priest nor prophet, but that He Himself in various ways spoke to and taught those whom He had chosen out of the people. Again, the Lord heard the prayer of Hannah,³ and Samuel her son became His prophet, known and mighty in Israel. When Samuel was called to proclaim the Lord's will to His backsliding people it was a time of peculiar darkness. The sons of Eli

¹ Judges, vi. 15.² Judges, vii. 9—14.³ 1 Samuel, i. 11

had grievously sinned against God, so that "men abhorred the sacrifice of the Lord."¹ "The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision."² Thus has sin, in all ages and at all times, closed the fountain of Divine revelation, and been as it were a stone on the well's mouth, by which the springing of living water has been restrained.

But the people of Israel did not turn to the Lord with a perfect heart, nor abide permanently in the way of righteousness; but as soon as the fear of their enemies was taken away, or the deliverer whom the Lord had raised up was dead, they again returned to their folly and sin: again the Lord withdrew his light and power from them; and again they had to learn by painful experience, that the descendants of Abraham were very weak, unless the power of Abraham's God was with them. But at the seasons of their greatest departure from Him, He did not fail to "rise early and send" His prophets unto them, to "show His people their transgression, and the people of Israel their sin," that they might turn, repent, and be saved. When the tribes of Israel were divided into two kingdoms, Jeroboam³ (fearing, lest the people, when they went to Jerusalem to worship the Lord in the way of His own appointing, should have their hearts turned again to Rehoboam) established an idolatrous worship at Bethel and Dan, ordained feasts, placed priests in the high-places, which he had made, and offered sacrifice contrary to the

¹ 1 Samuel, ii. 17.

² 1 Samuel, iii. 1

³ 1 Kings, xii. 16.

Lord's will.¹ The Lord in His never-ceasing care of His people, immediately sent a prophet to cry against the altar at Bethel, which was rent, and its ashes poured out.² Yet did not Jeroboam turn, nor the people repent; but the ten tribes were led on from one degree of evil to another, through the iniquity of their kings, until the worship of the true God was superseded by the worship of Baal, the Lord's prophets were slain, and every appearance of acknowledging the God of Abraham was so far removed, that one in the bitterness of his spirit cried thus unto the Lord; "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."³ Although the Lord "spake unto Israel, rising early and speaking, yet they heard not,"⁴ nor obeyed to turn from their iniquity and idolatry, but hardened their necks like the necks of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord, their God;⁵ until they were taken out of their own land by the Assyrian and their possessions given to others.⁶ How instructive is the history of this people! In it we see the truth continually illustrated, that "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness," and that neither the possession of a written law, nor the clearest manifestations of duty, can cause any to continue in the Divine favour, but such an entire subjection of the soul to His will as enables to

¹ 1 Kings, xii. 21—23.

² 1 Kings, xix. 14.

³ 2 Kings, xvii. 14.

⁴ 1 Kings, xiii. 1—5.

⁵ Jerem. vii. 13.

⁶ 2 Kings, xvii. 23—24.

do that work, which the Lord has appointed to be done.

The tribe of Judah did not learn wisdom from the evil which the Lord brought upon the Israelites for their transgressions. The sin of Judah was, however, of a different character ; they retained the temple-service and professed a confidence in the true God, but only " turned unto Him feignedly ;" and when oppressed by external difficulties, instead of seeking help from Him alone, who had so often been their deliverer, they generally hastened to lean on some arm of flesh. Yet in their rebellion the Lord cried unto them by His prophets ; and when, like Israel, they were carried into captivity ; and the city of David, and the temple of Solomon, where their fathers worshipped, were destroyed, He continued to send His messengers to turn them from the evil of their ways, that they might be brought from their servitude in Babylon to peace and establishment in their own land.

There were periods in the history of this people, when immediate revelations were so far withdrawn, that there was no vision nor answer from God. When they had so far forgotten Him, and so far frustrated His purpose in bringing them into the land of Canaan, it was said, " This is Jerusalem : I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the nations that are round about her."¹ Then indeed did the

¹ Ezekiel, v. 5, 6.

Lord forsake them and hide His face from them: then was the prophet silent, and wisdom and power perished from Israel, then "the Lord sent a famine upon the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they wandered from sea to sea, and from the north even unto the east, they ran to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and could not find it:"¹ and they had to know, that they had left a God that could save, to cry unto dumb gods, who could neither answer them, nor deliver them from calamities. The true God has always spoken to the faithful and made them rejoice in the sense of His presence, protection, and instruction; whilst the man-made gods, both then and now, have always been such as cannot save, who neither have ears to hear the cries of their worshippers, nor voice to answer them, nor eyes to see their troubles, nor foresight to anticipate and provide for them. But Jehovah did all this for His ancient people, as they abode in His fear. But when their hearts turned, and loved the false gods of those whom He had devoted to destruction, then their iniquities separated between Him and them, and their sins hid His face from them."² Then the darkness of death, which overspread the nations, gathered around Israel. They had rejected the law, they had destroyed the prophets and despised the priests, and therefore the blessings of the law were taken away, and its heavy curses rested upon them, and they were left to cry to the gods they had chosen

¹ Amos, viii. 11, 12.² Isaiah, lix. 1, 2.

to deliver them in the day of their calamity. Although the word and presence of God were thus unknown to Israel in general, yet for the remnant that feared His name, and kept themselves undefiled by idolatry among that rebellious people, there was still comfort and consolation in the God of their fathers, and as they obeyed the gentle drawings of His Spirit in the secret of the soul, and sought Him with full purpose of heart, He was found by them. There was Elijah among the Israelites, when their idolatry was nearly at the highest; Isaiah and Jeremiah were with the Jews at Jerusalem; and Ezekiel and Daniel with them in their captivity. The word of the Lord came to these, and when they wept before Him for "the slain of the daughter of their people," and for her children, who were carried away captive, and cried unto Him to visit and comfort His people, He opened to them in the light of His Spirit, that Jerusalem and the temple should again be built, and that their enemies should be brought low and destroyed. And accordingly, in His own time, He visited the outcasts of Israel, and raised up instruments to carry on the work of restoration, and caused the city to be built in the midst of enemies, by men, to whom He gave His Spirit and strength and wisdom, according to the requiring of the day.

All the true prophets, who spake to the seed of Abraham, were chosen, called, and qualified by God. The immediate revelation of His will was the primary rule of their conduct, and indeed that alone by which their mission could be authorised

or its character ascertained. This new revelation to the chosen prophets neither derogated from the law of Moses, nor tended in any degree to diminish men's respect for it. The corrupt nature of man required that the Lord should not only begin, but carry on his own work, and assist those whom He had appointed to be his messengers. And all, whom He sent, being actuated by the same spirit that taught Moses, their testimonies could not but be concordant with his, and all their labours tend to the same end, even to separate a people from idolatry, that they might be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation,"¹ unto the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth.

¹ Exod. xix. 6.

CHAPTER III.

DECLARATIONS OF THE ANCIENT PROPHETS AND OF CHRIST, SHOW THAT IMMEDIATE REVELATION WAS TO CONTINUE UNDER THE GOSPEL AND IN AN INCREASED MEASURE.

FROM what has preceded it appears, that from the time when Adam by transgression effaced from his soul the image of God, to the period antecedent to the gospel dispensation, the Lord imparted the knowledge of His will to men in various ways, and that immediate revelation was frequent. We have also seen that the introduction of a written law, in other words the committing to writing a revelation from God respecting moral duties and ritual observances, did not abolish His immediate agency ; but that during the wilderness travels of the Israelites, after their settlement in Canaan, and during their captivity in Babylon, the Lord continued to speak to them by prophets, by visions and in an immediate manner. Many of the prophets had merely to cry against the evils of the backsliding posterity of Abraham, and many of the visions had reference to that day, and the answers from between the cherubim generally related to the same period. The revelations to holy men were not always of this nature ; but they were led by the Spirit of God to speak of coming ages, and in all the beauty of description and energy of language to portray the day of the Messiah.

When Daniel, under a deep sense of the multiplied transgressions of Israel, because "they had sinned and done wickedly, and had rebelled even by departing from the judgments and precepts of the Lord, neither had hearkened unto His servants the prophets, which spake in His name to their kings, to their princes, their fathers, and to all the people of the land,"¹ had besought the Lord to look on the desolations of the sanctuary, the Lord sent His angel and told him, that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and again be destroyed with the sanctuary after the Messiah had come. Of this Messiah the prophet Isaiah thus writes: "The people, that walked in darkness, saw a great light; they that dwell in the valley of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. * * * For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and for ever."² And again, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He

¹ Daniel, ix. 5, 6.

² Isaiah, ix. 2, 6, 7.

will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Israel, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."¹ There will be no difficulty in determining to whom this language refers, or who the child was, to whom those glorious epithets are applied; for they could refer only to Him, who in the fullness of time was "made of a woman,"² who was not only the offspring but the root also of David,³ not only the Son, but the Lord,⁴ even the Eternal Word made flesh;⁵ and the whole prophecy is evidently a prediction of the gospel day, the last and complete dispensation, the last because of its completeness.⁶

And what is the import of these passages? They declare that Christ shall be the head of the people, and that His government shall be universal and everlasting; in other words, that "He shall be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel,"⁷ the Teacher, Governor, and Father of the sanctified. This has been God's purpose from the beginning, this has been the end of all His dispensations, to set His own kingdom over all, that He might be glorified in all. The Gospel

¹ Isaiah, ii. 2—4. ² Gal. iv. 4. ³ Revel. xxii. 16.

⁴ Matt. xxii. 41—46. ⁵ John, i. 14.

Comp. Heb. viii. 7, 8, and Heb. xiii. 20. ⁷ Luke, ii. 26.

was to be the consummation of all things ; in it transgression was to be finished, sin ended, reconciliation for iniquity made, and the most Holy anointed.¹ Jehovah spake to the patriarchs by angels, by visions, and dreams. He communicated with Moses face to face ; to the high-priest under the law He spake from between the cherubim, He poured His Spirit on the prophets, and manifested Himself more or less to the righteous in all ages ; but when the glorious gospel day arrived, the veil of the temple, which separated the holy of holies from common gaze, was to be rent, and men were no longer to be taught mediately by the high-priest, or by human agency alone,² nor to see the truths and realities of God indistinctly shadowed out by types ; but Christ was to open a way *for all*, even into the holy place, that all might there wait upon God, hear the voice of the true Shepherd, and know Him to be their free Teacher, Governor, and Guide.

In former dispensations the Lord's people had been comparatively few ; one here and another there turned to the influence of the Holy One, were taught by Him and made His instruments to arouse, rebuke, comfort, or instruct the people. The evil seed reigned, and righteousness and truth were trampled on ; darkness covered the world and gross darkness the people. But the men of God, in looking forward to the gospel day, saw the Sun of Righteousness arise and the darkness pass away before the brightness of His appearance : they saw

¹ Daniel, ix. 24.

² Jeremiah, xxi. 34.

the Israel of God (not they who were children of Abraham only according to the flesh, but they who were of his faith and righteousness¹) honoured and sought after,² and all nations coming to the light of Zion, all bowing in the temple of new Jerusalem, and the mighty God and everlasting Father become head over all. When, wrapt in the vision of God, they looked into future ages, they saw all Zion's children taught of the Lord,³ her stakes lengthened, and her cords strengthened, and the place of her tent enlarged to admit the influx of the people; they beheld God dwelling among men, and caring not only for the general affairs of the church, but also for individual concerns; being the Head not only when they were gathered together in His name, but also, "creating upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night,"⁴ and causing each, in quiet confidence under the government of the Prince of Peace, to sit under his own vine and fig-tree.⁵

And the ushering in of the gospel day was in language fully accordant with the prophetic writings. The Lord was to be called Jesus, because He would save His people *from their sins*:⁶—not that He would cause the walls of a second Jericho to fall, and after the example of Joshua, His anti-type, lead up the triumphant armies of Israel, that they might possess the land of their enemies; not that He would break the Roman yoke, but because

¹ Rom. iv. 12.² Zechar. viii. 23.³ Isa. liv. 13.⁴ Isa. iv. 5.⁵ Micah, iv. 4.⁶ Matt i. 21.

He would deliver them from a worse slavery, even from subjection to the prince of the power of the air, who worketh in the children of disobedience :¹ because He would be not only the Saviour of the children of Abraham according to the flesh, but also be for salvation unto the ends of the earth,² and gather together in one the children of God, that were scattered abroad.³ And that the work of Christ was to be a continued or progressing work, was implied not only in the title of Jesus, but in a more especial manner in that of "Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us."⁴ He, who "appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty,"⁵ and who revealed Himself to Moses and to those under the law, as I Am or the living God,⁶ was to be made known in the gospel day by the transcendently glorious appellation of Emmanuel-Jesus, or God with us a Saviour. That this title of Emmanuel was not only applicable to the "Word made flesh," but to Him in His continued presence as the sanctifier,⁷ and dweller⁸ in His people, appears from those passages of Scripture which speak of the spiritually baptized Christian, as a holy temple unto the Lord. "Ye are the temple of the living God ; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."⁹ And perhaps it is yet more evident from that declaration of the

¹ Eph. ii. 2.² Isa. xlix. 9.³ John, xi. 51, 52.⁴ Matt. i. 23.⁵ Exod. vi. 3.⁶ Exod. iii. 14.⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 30.⁸ Gal. ii. 20.⁹ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

Lord, when the days of his flesh were terminated, and He, as to outward appearance, was about to be removed from His disciples, "Lo I am *with you* *always*."¹

Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus Christ as the Emmanuel,² was repeated immediately antecedent to His birth; when the child was born and the son given, His nativity was proclaimed by the Heavenly host;³ and the aged Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he should not die, until he had seen the Lord's Christ, rejoiced in having seen His salvation, the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel.⁴ After Christ had commenced His public ministry, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and read that portion of Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord;"⁵ and He declared that it was *then* fulfilled. When we remember that this prophecy stands in the midst of others containing promises respecting the state of the church under the government of the Messiah, we are obliged to conclude, that were this prophecy fulfilled in Him, so must be all the rest. A brief review of some of those promises may tend to illustrate the subject under consideration.

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20.

² Isa. vii. 14.

³ Luke, ii. 13.

⁴ Luke, ii. 27—32.

⁵ Luke, iv. 18—21.

It is only by reading the whole prophecy,¹ so as not to allow the connexion to be broken by the division of the chapters, that one can see its relation to the day of Christ. It is interspersed with much matter relating to the past transgression and then existing calamities of the seed of Abraham; yet it seems as though the prophet, whilst portraying this sorrowful picture, was permitted to rejoice in prospect of the future glory of the church, and to be comforted by faith in the sufficiency of the Lord's power to make a new heaven and a new earth, wherein might dwell righteousness and His own throne be established over all. The exhortation to comfort Zion,² with which the prophecy commences, appears to be in anticipation of what is about to be foretold: whilst the real beginning seems to be the allusion to the messenger, who was to go before Christ, when "the glory of the Lord was to be revealed, and all flesh to see it together."³ And Zion is exhorted to "get up into the high mountain," and Jerusalem "to lift up her voice with strength, and to say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God."⁴ This is that same Zion and Jerusalem, from which the law and word of the Lord was to go;⁵ not the Jerusalem which then was, and was in bondage with her children, but Jerusalem which is above which is the mother of us all.⁶ And this Jerusalem had to proclaim the glad tidings: "Behold your God! Behold the Lord will come with strong hand and His

¹ From Isaiah, xl. to lxvi.

² Isaiah, xl. 5, comp. Acts, ii. 17.

³ Isaiah, ii. 3.

⁴ Isaiah, xl. 1, 2.

⁵ Isaiah, xl. 9.

⁶ Gal. iv. 25, 26.

arm shall rule for Him : behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd : He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."¹ And so great and extensive was the purpose of Christ's coming, that it is said further on : "It is a light thing, that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, and to be for *salvation unto the ends of the earth.*"² I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inhabit the desolate heritages ; that thou mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth ; and to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst,³ neither shall the heat nor sun smite them : for *He* that hath mercy on them *shall lead them*, even by springs of water shall He guide them."⁴ Again the prophet declares : "The Lord shall comfort Zion ; He shall comfort all her waste places ; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy and gladness shall be heard therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."⁵ And Jerusalem is exhorted to awake and stand up, because the cup of the Lord's fury shall be taken from her and poured out to her enemies.⁶ "Awake, awake ; put on thy strength, O

¹ Isaiah, xl. 10, 11. comp. John, x. 11—14.

² Acts, xxviii. 28.

³ John, iii. 35.

⁴ Isaiah, xlix. 6, 8, 9, 10.

⁵ Isaiah, li. 3.

⁶ Isaiah, li. 17, 23.

Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city ; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee uncircumcised and unclean. Shake thyself from the dust ; arise and sit down, O Jerusalem ; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.¹ For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for naught and ye shall be redeemed without money."² And having alluded to the afflictions of Jerusalem, her oppression and groaning, the prophet strikingly introduces a contrast in the glory of the coming and exaltation of Christ. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace ; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, *Thy God reigneth.*"³ The coming, life, sorrows, and death of the Lord Jesus are minutely described ;⁴ and as though the contemplation of that stupendous manifestation of the love of God,⁵ gave the prophet an enlarged view of the Lord's work in the gospel day, he breaks forth into an animated exhortation to Zion, to rejoice because of the increase of her children, and to cease from fear, because she shall not be confounded, but the Lord, who had hid his face from her for a moment, shall have mercy on her with everlasting lovingkindness, and because His covenant of peace shall never be removed ; and although she had been afflicted, tossed with the tempest and not comforted, yet she shall know a glorious establishment, and all her children

¹ John, viii. 36.² Isaiah, lii. 1, 2. comp. Rev. iii. 18.³ Isaiah, lii. 7.⁴ Isaiah, liii.⁵ John, iii. 16.

shall be taught of the Lord,¹ and shall have great peace,² and whosoever shall gather together against her shall fall for her sake.³ Frequent allusion has been made in the course of the prophecy to the call of the Gentiles and to the universal extent and efficacy of the work of Christ. But that all might be assured that the Redemption, which the Lord would manifest in the gospel day, as it was not confined to any people, was not limited to any class, the prophet thus invites all to the Lord's feast: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,⁴ and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfyeth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,⁵ and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live;⁶ and I will make an everlasting covenant⁷ with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a *leader* and *commander* to the people."⁸ And soon after, (as though filled with a sense of the majesty of Jehovah, of his infinite distance from all created things, of his power to bring about that which by his Spirit He had revealed to his prophet, as if assured that although to man's finite mind the word which went forth from the mouth of the Lord might appear to return void, his work be

¹ John, vi. 45. ² Eph. ii. 16. John, xvi. 33. ³ Isaiah, liv.

⁴ John, vii. 37. ⁵ John, iv. 27. ⁶ Matt. xi. 28.

⁷ Heb. xiii. 20.

⁸ Isaiah, lv. 1—4.

hindered, and his will not accomplished, the earth should yet eventually be changed, and "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ,"¹) Isaiah again breaks forth in this descriptive language: "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off."² The prophet proceeds with promises of blessings to the righteous, and to the strangers who join themselves to the Lord: he shows the people of Israel their sin in departing from the living God to worship idols, and their hypocrisy in seeking Him daily and delighting to know his ways,³ whilst they neither did righteousness, nor kept his ordinances: and promises them, if they will really and truly return, that their light shall break forth as the morning, and their health spring up speedily; their righteousness go before them, and the glory of the Lord be their reward: that the Lord shall answer their call, and to their cry say, Here I am: that their light shall rise in obscurity and their darkness be as the noon-day; that the Lord shall *guide them continually*, and satisfy their soul in drought, and they shall be like a watered garden, and like a well of water, whose waters fail not;⁴ and that their chil-

¹ Rev. xi. 15.² Isaiah, lv. 12, 13.³ Isaiah, lviii. 2.⁴ Comp. John. iv. 14.

dren shall build the old waste places, and raise up the foundations of many generations.¹ "For behold," continues the prophet, "the Lord's arm is not shortened at all, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you."² He then recounts the enormity and general prevalence of their rebellion against the righteousness of God: "and the Lord saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation unto Him, and His righteousness it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him: and the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."³ The prophet then

¹ Isaiah, lviii. 8—12. ² Isaiah, lix. 1, 2. ³ Isaiah, lix. 16—21.

addresses the church in this full and expressive language : “ Arise and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people ; but *the Lord* shall *arise* upon thee, and His *glory* shall be *seen upon thee*.¹ And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”² What a view is here opened to the vision of the prophet ! he was given to see the church, which has been despised by men at all times and in all ages, gloriously exalted in the world :—and all men and all classes, the multitude of camels and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah—they from Sheba, the isles and ships of Tarshish, the flocks of Kedar, and the rams of Nebaioth, the glory of Lebanon, the fir-tree, and pine-tree and the box together, all coming to her,—coming unto the name of the Lord her God, and to the Holy One of Israel, to minister unto her, and to come up with acceptance on the Lord’s altar, and to beautify His sanctuary. Then was she to be called “ The city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel ; ”³ and the prophet concludes with this glorious promise : “ Violence shall no more be heard in thee, wasting nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but *the Lord* shall be unto thee an *everlasting light* and *thy God thy glory*. Thy sun shall no more go

¹ Matt. v. 14.² Isaiah, lx. 1—3.³ Comp. Heb. xii. 22.

down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw herself ; for the Lord shall be thine Everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people shall be all righteous ; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hand, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation : I the Lord will hasten it in his time.”¹

Such is the character of the prophecies immediately preceding that which the Redeemer declared was fulfilled in Him : they are all connected and all refer to the same period, and shall all be fulfilled in “His time.” That time is the gospel dispensation, “the last times,” in which “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath *spoken unto us by His Son*,”² making *Him* head of the church,³ the Saviour not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles, and the Shepherd, not only to gather the outcasts of Israel, but to be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. In this day the prophet saw all the children of the true church *taught of God*, and the Lord’s everlasting light so arisen and shining over all, that *created* lights in the spiritual world should be no longer needed, and men should no longer speak every man unto his neighbour, and every man unto his brother, saying, Know the Lord, but all should *know him from the least unto the greatest*. Christ accordingly came with authority : His purpose and will was not to

¹ Isaiah, lx. 18—22.

² Heb. i. 1, 2.

³ Eph. i. 22.

destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil;¹ yet in His ministry He directed the people to a far higher standard of holiness than had been inculcated by Moses, forbidding some things which were permitted under the law, because of the people's hardness of heart.² Other peculiarities of the gospel day will be passed by to speak of what more particularly belongs to the subject before us, viz. spiritual agency. We know that this agency existed under the law; we know too that it was generally believed in by the Jews. But notwithstanding this there was much to be done under the law, which was entirely of an outward nature, and which merely carnal men might perform. But Christ said, "The hour cometh, yea now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." In the gospel day, neither mount Gerizim of the Samaritans, nor the temple of Jerusalem was intended to be set apart, that men should go there and worship the Father; the vail which concealed the holy place, was about to be rent; the typical sacrifices were about to be ended by the one perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus; the priesthood of Levi was about to terminate, that Christ might be "the High Priest"³ in the temple of New Jerusalem, not built by the hands of men, but raised by the living God on the living foundation, not with dead stones, but with living souls;⁴ even those whom He has quickened by His own power and made triumphant over death. And in this temple of living men a new order of worship

¹ Matt. v. 17. ² Matt. xix. 8. ³ Heb. vii. 26. ⁴ 1 Peter ii. 4, 5.

was about to be established, not consisting in signs, but in truth and reality, under the immediate superintendence of the Spiritual High Priest.¹ Under the gospel a body of men was not to be separated from the rest, by whom the holy things were to be administered and by whom others might offer their gifts unto God ; but Christ was to be the High Priest and "one Mediator,"² by whom, really and truly, each one might for himself come unto God and have access to His throne. And as the collective body of the living members of the church was to be built upon the Rock, and thus be a glorious and holy temple to the Lord, so was each member to know himself in particular built on the same living foundation, and to be a temple unto God, in which he might prepare his own sacrifices and offer them acceptably unto God by Christ Jesus ; and all were to be called "Priests of the Lord and ministers of their God."³ Although the righteous under the law made an acceptable offering to God, and performed acceptable worship, only as the Holy Spirit was operating in their souls, yet it is very evident that the legal ritual admitted of far less access to God and far less intimate communion with Him, than is implied in the description of Gospel worship, and it is also evident, that the manifestation of the Spirit must be more clear to them, to whom Christ was to be the Head and High Priest, Governor, Teacher and Guide, than to those who had the line of their duty, as regarded

¹ Heb. viii. 2.

² 1 Tim. ii. 5, comp. 1 Peter, ii. 3—5.

³ Isa. lxi. 6.

their worship, clearly written in the law, and whose High Priest was not a spiritual, but a human being. The law was a dispensation of shadows, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,¹ in whom and under whose government, the things pointed at by the legal types were to be really and truly known by all believers, who "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."²

The Lord Jesus, in the days of his ministering in the flesh, reiterated the prophecies of the prophets respecting the Gospel dispensation. "I," said He, "if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me."³ "He that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this," adds the apostle, "spake He of the Spirit, which they which believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."⁴ "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."⁵ In these passages three things are mentioned as about to take place in the Gospel dispensation, which did not commence, until Jesus bowed His head on the cross, and said,

¹ John, i. 17.² John, i. 13.³ John, xii. 32.⁴ John, vii. 38, 39.⁵ John, xiv. 21, 24.

“It is finished ;” viz. the call of the Gentiles, the increased measure of the Spirit given to believers, and the indwelling of God in the righteous. Thus then the types under the law, the promises of God, and the declarations of the Lord Jesus Himself, incline us to look for a peculiar manifestation of divine power and presence under the Gospel or reign of Emmanuel, which would produce the acknowledgment, “the tabernacle of God is with man.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH—THE
APOSTACY.

IN full accordance with antecedent prophecy, the Spirit of God was poured on the early believers. When the Holy Ghost had fallen on the disciples, and gifted them with miraculous power, the apostle Peter declared, that the prophecy of Joel was then fulfilled : “ It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh ; and your sons, and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit and they shall prophesy.”¹ The gift of God’s Spirit was mentioned by the inspired teachers of that day in a manner very different from what it had been in preceding dispensations ; it was spoken of as something peculiar, something promised, and belonging, to those who believed in the Lord Jesus. When Christ had given commission to His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations, He added this impressive language ; “ baptizing them into² the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”³ Under

¹ Acts, ii. 17, 18.² Etc.³ Matt. xxviii. 19.

the law men were to be baptized with elementary water unto Moses, or the dispensation of Moses; but under the Gospel they were to be baptized with spiritual fire,¹ not unto human heads, or governors, or teachers, but into God,—into Father, Son, and Spirit. God was known in the patriarchal dispensation; or perhaps it may be said, He is known in what is called, though erroneously, natural religion, as the Creator; to the believing patriarchs, He was known more particularly and immediately, not only as the Creator, but as the Father and Preserver of the righteous; under the law He was further known, as one who required sacrifice for sin and a peculiar form of worship; but under the Gospel He was to be known not only as a Father, but a Father of love,—not only as requiring a sacrifice for sin, but as having provided one;—not as having one place of presence, but as being everywhere, and with and in all those, whom He had sanctified, to be their Teacher, Comforter, Guide, and everlasting Support. The character of the dispensation is spoken of,—the things commanded by God to be preached by His messengers as peculiarities of the dispensation; for as in every dispensation there have been those, who, receiving, appreciating, and by living faith obeying the teachings of the Spirit, were permitted to see into the glorious privileges of the Gospel, and to enjoy them in some measure; so now the time of Gospel is arrived, many, yea, very many loiter in dispensations of days gone by, standing either in

¹ Matt. iii. 11.

the mere Gentile knowledge of God's Being, or going a little further and acknowledging his authority, or seeing Him in His moral attributes, perceiving His hatred of sin, and trembling as at Sinai; or believing in the one sacrifice of atonement, yet not coming to the full participation of the privileges of the Gospel.

In the conclusion of the commission, Christ added: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."¹ When the period was arriving, in which he would lay down His life for the world, and sorrow had filled the hearts of His disciples, because He, who had taught them the words of eternal Life and had kept them by His Power, was about to be separated from them, He told them, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you."² And when that great work was accomplished, and the Lord Jesus had risen triumphant over the power of sin, death, and Satan, He appeared frequently to His disciples; and when those external manifestations were about to cease, having given them commission to preach the Gospel to all nations, He promised to be with them, to comfort them in sorrow, to give them a mouth and unanswerable wisdom,³ when opposed by the subtlety of men, to be their Head and Governor, to be in their assemblies,⁴ and to rule by His own power the order of their worship; Himself the High Priest, by which each one

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20.

² John, xiv. 18.

³ Luke, xxi. 15.

⁴ Matt. xviii. 20.

might have access to the Father; Himself the chief Shepherd, extending His crook towards the sheep and lambs of His fold, and appointing the station and work, and the nature and time of the work, to the inferior shepherds of the flock; comforting the soul that mourned, healing the broken heart, and binding up the wounded spirit, giving milk to His babes, and stronger food to His young men, and prescribing for every state and attainment, that of which it stood in need, and which could only be known to Him who searcheth all hearts and knoweth the thoughts of every soul.

In full reliance on the promise of their Divine Master, the disciples tarried at Jerusalem, until the Spirit was poured out from on high. They then began to preach with authority the resurrection and power of Jesus Christ. To some who were pricked to the heart by Peter's ministry, and inquired, what they should do, the apostle replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto *you*, and to *your children*, and to *all* that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call."¹ If any language is capable of proving that the gift, the peculiar and extraordinary gift of the Spirit, was to continue with the church of Christ for ever, that language is before us. And the harmony of meaning without identity

¹ Acts, ii. 37, 38.

of expression with that prophecy of Isaiah, which has been already mentioned, affords additional proof, that the light and glory of the gospel day is foretold by that prophet. The prophecy alluded to is, "My Spirit, that is upon thee, and my words, which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of *thy* mouth, nor out of the mouth of *thy seed*, nor out of the mouth of *thy seed's seed*, from *henceforth and for ever*."¹ Accordingly we find that the Holy Spirit was poured out not only on the day of Pentecost and on the apostles, but on the believing Gentiles,² and also on others.³ Indeed it is very evident, that the Holy Spirit was in a peculiar manner, according to prophecy, present to those who were first gathered to the faith of Jesus Christ. He was not only with the apostles to enable them to prosecute their more arduous labours, but with the disciples and little ones in the assemblies to place each member in its own place and to enable it to abide there. The Spirit which was poured on the disciples at Pentecost, and which enabled Peter so to preach the truth, that many were convinced, converted, and strengthened to "continue steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship,"⁴ was the same that healed the impotent man, and again gave the Lord's servant opportunity to proclaim His name with power ; that gave the apostles wisdom and firmness in the midst of persecution ; that

¹ Isa. lix. 21.² Acts, x. 44.³ Acts, xix. 6.⁴ Acts, ii. 16.

enabled Stephen boldly to set before the Jewish rulers their iniquity, and opened his eye to see into the kingdom of God; that converted the persecuting Saul, so that with earnest and holy zeal, he preached the faith, which he once destroyed; that instructed Peter by a vision to forsake the narrowmindedness of a Jewish education, and enabled him to preach with expanded Gospel views the way of life unto the Gentiles; that gave faith to Cornelius and his household, and as the privilege of that faith, an increased measure of spiritual influence; that said to the church, as they ministered unto the Lord and fasted, "Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work, whereunto I have called them;" thus showing His presence in the counsels of His people, and His right to reign, and to call whom He would, and to send them where and when He pleased. But the acts of the apostle are a record of one continued work of the same Spirit, appointing some apostles, some prophets, some teachers; giving to one the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gift of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. By one Spirit they were all baptized into one body, whether

they were Jews or Gentiles, whether they were bond or free, and were all made to drink into one Spirit.¹

The reception of the Holy Spirit was then the seal of discipleship. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ," said the apostle, "he is none of His."² And in another place He writes, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father."³ There is nothing equivocal in this language. They only were Christ's, who had His Spirit; they only were sons, into whose hearts the Spirit of Christ had come, crying, Abba Father. And again, writing to the Ephesians, the same apostle says, "Ye trusted in Christ, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the promised possession, unto the praise of His glory."⁴ And again, "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."⁵ Is any language capable of setting forth more clearly the light and glory which rested on believers? The Spirit of God was in their hearts crying Abba Father; it was the earnest of their inheritance, and bore witness with their spirit that they were the sons of God,"⁶ and caused them to

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 6—13.

⁴ Eph. i. 13, 14.

² Rom. viii. 9.

⁵ 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

³ Gal. iv. 6.

⁶ Rom. viii. 16.

know that Christ abode in them.¹ Thus did the Lord according to His promise make His dwelling with them; they were His people, and He their God; He was their Father, and they were His sons and daughters.

The inspired apostles knew their calling, and their place in the church. In writing to their fellow-disciples they professed that they had not dominion over their faith,² and that if in anything *they were* otherwise minded God Himself would reveal it unto them.³ As the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit was their own rule of faith and conduct, so they knew that no faith would be living and operative, and no conduct truly righteous, but such as were built, the one on the immediate help, and the other on the immediate revelation of the same Spirit that operated in them. They therefore, although they knew the authority by which they acted, did not exalt themselves in God's heritage, nor claim to be head of His people. The church was the house of God;⁴ He was the Master,⁵ and they servants appointed to work for Him, and the other members of the church were fellow-servants of the same Lord. And although the station of the apostles was higher, and their work more honourable and arduous, yet they referred all to their own Master and Head:⁶ and nothing gave them greater joy, than to see those, whom by Him they had begotten to a living

¹ 1 John, iii. 24.

² 2 Cor. i. 24.

³ Phil. iii. 15.

⁴ 1 Tim. iii. 18.

⁵ Matt. xxiii. 8.

⁶ Rom. xiv. 4.

faith,¹ walking in the truth,² and so grown in grace as to reign as kings without them.³ They had no desire to continue to feed the church with milk;⁴ they longed rather to see all its members strong men, and able to do the work of strong men, and endowed with the wisdom of men. Their object and the tendency of their ministry was to bring men from the first principles to the full knowledge of God: yea, to call them from the worship of the true God, according to the law and in the letter, to the inward and true worship and knowledge of Him according to the Gospel and in the Spirit; and to exalt Christ as Head, and to build the church, not on men's words, although they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, but on the foundation on which they themselves rested, which was Christ revealed in them by the light and power of the Father.⁵ The various similes, which the inspired of that age applied to the church clearly indicate that they regarded Christ as their Head, and that, not by profession and in a notion that He was such nominally and at a distance only, but that He was Head in precious reality near to and within every living member of the church. They compared it to a body of which He was the Head; to a tree of which He was the Root: to a city of which He was the Foundation; to a flock of which He was the Shepherd and Overseer; to a sanctuary of which He was the Priest; thus signifying that although in a body there are many members, yet only *one*

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 15.² 3 John, 4.³ 1 Cor. iv. 2.⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 2.⁵ Matt. xvi. 17; Gal. i. 16.

Head ; that although in a city there are many stones, yet only one foundation, so although in the church there were many members, and to each member an office assigned, yet there was but one Lord, one Shepherd, one Foundation, one Minister and High Priest, both to apostles and to those to whom they were sent ; both to evangelists and to those to whom the Gospel was preached ; both to those who were as mouths in the church and to those who were as ears. There was only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one vocation by one Spirit.¹ There were various attainments in the church ; there were babes, young men, and fathers ; but to whatever attainment any had arrived, it was by the operation of the same Spirit, by the power of the same Lord, by building on the same foundation, and having the same faith wrought in them by the same Author and Finisher of faith.²

There was not one foundation for the apostles, and an other for those, who were not apostles. Every man had by nature the same inherent corruption, and enmity against God, unto whatever he might afterwards be brought by the workings of the Holy Spirit within him. The same divine operation, which opened the eyes of the apostles and enabled them to preach the Gospel in "demonstration of the Spirit and with power," was needed by the meanest and feeblest in the church, or the preaching of the apostles would have been in vain. So that it was not a matter of mere speculation, but of

¹ Eph. iv. 4, 5.

² Heb. xii. 2.

important practical consequence, whether the operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul, or writings which had proceeded from Him, or the teachings of inspired men, were to be the foundation of faith and rule of conduct. What will man in his natural state learn from inspired writings and inspired teachings? will not both the one and the other be as unmeaning speeches and dead words unto him, as foolishness, not understood and despised, or if understood by the head, not savingly known and applied by the heart? This was the doctrine of the apostles, and as originating from it, they preached regeneration, and immediate spiritual illumination and the necessity for that illumination, and its superiority to every thing that could come mediately from books or from men; because none of the things of the Spirit of God, however clearly revealed to others, could be perceived or comprehended by a mind unenlightened by the same agency.¹ The necessity for an immediate revelation arises from the condition of fallen man; if it cease, salvation and knowledge of spiritual things must perish from the earth; and although man should be in possession of a volume containing a clear illustration of every doctrine of truth, and containing not only all moral and general rules of conduct, but also every individual duty in most minute description, Satan would notwithstanding reign over the world in darkness, unless God imparted His illuminating power and presence; for the truth must ever remain unchanged, that "No man

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he, to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."¹

To the apostles and prophets, by whom the Gospel was preached, the Holy Spirit was the primary guide to truth, and on His immediate teachings they based their principles, and founded their conduct. Yet was not this any derogation from the authority of the law and the prophets. The revelations which were made to the apostles did not annul those which the Holy Spirit had given to others, who had gone before them, in the same arduous path of dedication to the cause of truth. Their blinded opponents did indeed charge them with speaking against Moses and the law, when they preached the more spiritual doctrines of the Gospel ; but "wisdom was justified of her children," and the spiritually illumined saw Moses honoured by the fulfilment of those things, of which both he and all the prophets prophesied. Nor were the inspired apostles jealous lest the early Christians, through a belief in the reality of immediate revelation, should deny the authority of those messages, with which they were commissioned. They sought the glory of God, and not their own ; they did not teach, that they themselves might be exalted, but that men might be brought from darkness to light, to the Teacher of teachers in the secret of their own souls ;—to that anointing from the Holy One which abode in them, so that they needed not that any man should teach them.² The apostles

¹ Matt. xi. 27.

² 1 John, ii. 20—27.

knew their orders ; they knew their standing, and therefore knew that every spirit, that rose in opposition to them, was not of God. The true prophets never had reason to cry out against immediate revelation ; that was the ground of their prophecy, and that by which alone it could be received. The same Spirit, which opened it unto them, was alone able to seal it with authority to the souls and consciences of the hearers.

The state and privileges of the early church are further set forth in the epistle to the Hebrews. The inspired apostle had shown that Christ was the Son of God, by whom He was in the last days speaking to the world, that He had taken upon Him flesh, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, that His Priesthood was unchanging, and the covenant of which He was the Mediator, perfect, and therefore, as the apostle afterwards states, everlasting ; and he then addresses the church in this remarkable language : “ Ye are not come to the mount, that *might be touched*, and that burned with fire ; nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words : * * * * But *ye are come* unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that

speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not Him *that speaketh*. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth, but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom¹ which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire."² The apostle here distinguishes between the tangible mount Sinai and the spiritual mount Sion. The mount Sinai, that could be touched, was that to which Moses led the people; an outward leader to an outward mount to receive an outward law. But the apostle of the Gentiles, who was sent to preach not the letter but the Spirit, declared that the church was come to the mount Zion, the city of the living God, the *new Jerusalem*, even to that Jerusalem, as the same apostle expresses in another place, "which is *above*, and is free, and is the mother of us all."³ This was the mountain of the Lord's house, which was to be exalted above the mountains and hills; this was the Sion, from which was to go forth the law, and this the Jerusalem, from which was to

¹ Comp. 1 Peter, ii. 9, and Rev. v. 10.

² Heb. xii. 18—29.

³ Galat. iv. 26.

proceed the word of the Lord ; this was the city of the living God, whose walls were salvation and her gates praise, and on which the Lord had arisen with an everlasting light. And to this the faithful in Christ Jesus had come ; in this light of the Lord they walked ; and knew, what it was to quench their spiritual thirst from that pure stream, which flowed and shall for ever flow, from the throne, which is the exaltation and dominion, of God and the Lamb. For the throne of God and of His Christ is in mount Sion, in the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God ; because nothing that defileth, neither whatever worketh an abomination or maketh a lie, can enter, and there the Lord is exalted and reigns ; but without are the wicked, and there is the throne of Satan and the kingdom of darkness and death.

What, did the first believers indeed come to this city, did they indeed come to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect ? Yes, as truly as they had experienced a coming to *Christ the Mediator* and to the *blood of sprinkling* ! Why should we turn away from the truth, although it should prove that the glory of God has well nigh departed from the church and that His light has been greatly withdrawn ? Our turning from the truth will not make it a lie, nor render us inexcusable for refusing Him, who then spake from heaven and who *yet speaketh*. If the apostle intended anything by the language above cited ; it was that the mountain of the Lord's house, mount Zion, the new Jerusalem, the city of the

living God, was not an outward and tangible object, but spiritual and invisible to the eyes of flesh and blood; and that believers in that day had come to it and known fellowship with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and with the living God, and with the only Mediator. What the Lord Jesus himself told Nathanael he should see was then witnessed by the collective body of believers: "Hereafter thou shalt see the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."¹ What Jacob saw in a vision at Bethel was realized in the experience of the church militant of that day: Christ opened the way to the Father; he was that ladder which formed the connexion between the church on earth and the church glorified in heaven. Believers knew, through being livingly united to Him who was head in heaven, a fellowship and communion with those glorified spirits who were with the Word, being "called and chosen and faithful." They were not commanded to look, "lo here and lo there" in outward observation, for the kingdom of God, but both Christ himself and his apostles preached the same doctrines, that the kingdom of God was an inward kingdom,² and to be known by the spiritual and not by the external senses. This was a hard doctrine in that day,—a doctrine which the letter-read but not spiritually-illuminated have always despised, and of which they have inquired, "How can these things be?" But they can be, and they will be; they have been known by the enlightened and

¹ John, i. 51.² Luke, xvii. 21.

faithful children of God, and they may yet be known by all who follow the same Lord in the same way as they followed Him. If any man will be his disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow Christ. For the promises are the same to the church in all ages, and the same privileges may be enjoyed by all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and follow Him in simplicity.

But, alas ! how soon did "the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed ;" how soon did the light which had arisen and led the faithful from the kingdom of darkness become obscured, and the Power which gathered them become superseded by human policy and wisdom ! The simplicity of the Gospel of Christ was too great to be *practically* pleasing to the wisdom of men ; whilst its effects were too striking, its doctrines too sublime, and its promises too glorious not to claim their attention. Had the end of the Gospel been to enable men to gain a literal knowledge of its doctrines, and to be holy without a cross inwardly known and borne, the wise men of the world would never have quarrelled with it, nor have laboured to invent ways by which its privileges might be enjoyed without walking in the path by which they can be obtained. But the purpose of the Gospel was far otherwise : it was intended to bring men from "darkness to light and from *the power* of Satan unto God," that they might know Christ and His kingdom exalted in them.

The beginning of that kingdom, which the Lord Jesus declared, "cometh not by observation," and

which is not known by following those who are crying, "Lo here, and lo there," is very small. It is small in individuals; for the kingdom must be known by each before it can be universally exalted. It is in the soul, not as an omnipotent exertion of Divine power, but as a little light, even as a little seed. It is as a little seed, because from it springs all that can be good, or that is of God. The beginning of the kingdom of God is a little light in the soul, by which sin is shown¹ and condemned.² As sin is that which separates between man and God, sin is that which is first made manifest by the light; and as the kingdom of Satan is essentially and only exalted in sin, the Holy Spirit first re-proves and pleads against that, for whilst sin is in dominion the kingdom of Christ cannot be known. But as heed is given to that little light, the light which shineth in darkness,³ and as its manifestations are cherished and its injunctions obeyed through the power of Christ, the day of the Gospel is known to dawn, and the day-star to arise in the heart. And as the work of salvation is thus progressive, and is the work of God from the beginning to the end, so was the spread of the Gospel also to be progressive and to depend on the Lord Himself being acknowledged and known as the spiritual head of the church, under whose immediate guidance and infallible direction she might go on to do His will and to exalt His kingdom over all darkness and death, so that the kingdoms of this world might become the kingdom of God and

¹ Ephes. v. 13.² John, iii. 20.³ John, i. 5.

His Christ. Whilst the church abode in His counsel, whilst she remembered at once her privileges and her duties, and refused to acknowledge man as her head, or the wisdom of man as her director, how were the mighty slain by the Word of the Lord, and how did the foundations of earth and hell tremble! But human wisdom soon aimed at and gained pre-eminence in the church; then the simplicity of the Gospel was mystified, its truths confused by being mixed up with heathen superstitions and human philosophy, experimental knowledge gave way to notions, and creeds and doctrines took place of the inward knowledge of Jesus Christ: his Gospel was set forth as a religion of the head rather than of the heart, and the way to the crown was far removed from the cross. So that whilst with the lips men were confessing the name of Jesus, and their knees were bowed as an external manifestation of adoration, the throne of Satan was still exalted, and gross darkness again gathered upon the world. What error or heresy was equal to this error? It was not as that when the whole world was wrapt in idolatry and abominable sin; it was not as when Israel turned from the God of their fathers to worship the false gods of the nations which surrounded them. These sins were perhaps of less magnitude than those into which the professing church soon ran. Idolaters worshipped idols as idols, and Israel bowed to Baal as Baal; but in the benighted church Satan was exalted above all that is called God, and sat in the temple of God, showing that he was God; and they who professed and called

themselves Christians had Satan reigning in them, and worshipped that which he had exalted in Christ's stead. The spirit of evil cared little what profession men made, if he could only have possession of their hearts. When the Lord had an external temple, he led men to despise its rites and to pollute its sanctuary; but when those external things were done away, and the necessity of knowing God in the soul,—of having His kingdom there exalted, His power there known, and His worship there performed,—was preached by the Gospel, Satan opposed himself to it; for if the power of God be known in the soul, all adoration of the evil spirit must be refused and obedience to him must cease. He opposed himself to the inward religion of the Gospel by exalting himself, not as Satan, *but as God*. By his transforming power he raised before the eyes an image of Deity to which the church bowed, an image of a Saviour which it adored; an image was the beginning and an image the end of its religion; and whilst the philosophic professors of Christianity were helped to work out their systems and to gratify the senses with external show, by “the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal,” the true doctrines of the Gospel and the saving knowledge of Christ were concealed with the Lord's “hidden ones.” It was a fearful time when the church so far departed from the foundation on which Christ promised to build it, even on the immediate revelation of Himself by the Father,¹ to raise a superstructure on the wisdom of flesh and

¹ Matt. xvii. 17, 18.

blood, which never did and never can impart the true knowledge of Jesus, nor enable any savingly to confess that He is Christ.¹ The badge of true discipleship² was lost, and the pages of history abound with records of blood and cruelty. . Doctrines, and those frequently originating in man's wisdom and not in God's revelation, were esteemed of more importance than holiness of life, and a want of conformity to the opinions of the dominant sect led to bitter persecution. What the inspired apostle declared did not belong to him, viz. dominion over the faith of believers, the bigoted heads of the nominal church not only claimed but attempted to establish by the sword. Thus spiritual blindness and spiritual arrogance went hand in hand, and united to scourge those who, by refusing to acknowledge the right of men to reign or sit in Christ's throne, made themselves obnoxious to their hatred.

This state of the church was foreseen by the apostles. They prophesied, that Antichrist would gain a temporary dominion, and that the true church would be obliged to fly from his tyranny into the wilderness. This was the period in which Mystery Babylon—the false church,—she, who was the mother of all abominations, and held in her hand the cup of intoxication, with which she caused the nations to be filled, to be drunken and stumble, who sat on the dragon and had his power,—this was the period when she was exalted. Here they, who were under her power, had the name to live,

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

² John, xiii. 35.

whilst they were dead; they *talked* of Christ and His power, of His sacrifice and salvation; but not knowing experimentally those things of which they spake, and either not reading the Scriptures at all, or not reading them under the influence of the Spirit of Truth, their opinions were based not on the teachings of the Spirit, but on carnal wisdom to suit the carnal expediency of those, whose worldly interest it was to keep the minds of men enthralled by superstition. Being neither able nor willing to bring the church from the wilderness, to raise her from the dust of the earth, and to remove the weeds of her widowhood and mourning, that she might again “look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;”—not being able to raise the church to the privileges of the Gospel, they attempted to lower the privileges of the Gospel to suit the state of an apostate church. Holiness, which was to have been inscribed on believers, and to have characterised them as a peculiar people, and a seed, which the Lord had blessed, became a nominal thing: and sins, instead of being blotted out by a living faith of Christ’s own begetting, in His own one sacrifice, were expiated by the lip of man, and man’s absolution from them was purchaseable by the gold of the world; the head of the church was a man supported by human governments, and enforcing his authority by carnal weapons, instead of Christ having all power in heaven and earth committed unto Him, and working mightily for the establishment of His spiritual Israel by a spiritual warfare;

and instead of each being urged to know God for himself, that he might be taught by Him, men endeavoured to confine all knowledge to a self-nominated and usurping priesthood, from whom the people were to obtain all spiritual information, and who assumed to themselves the mediatorship between God and man to a far greater extent than existed under the inferior dispensation of Moses. Dark, awfully dark was that age. But time passed away; and the Lord, who by His own power had all along kept His Israel, though they were few, scattered, and hidden, began to vindicate His own cause. One after another was raised up to testify against the reign of darkness, and to suffer for the cause of truth, so that the heads of Babel no longer held an undisputed authority.

Great indeed were the benefits which were bestowed on the afflicted church through the righteous zeal and efforts of the early reformers. When we remember, that they had to contend not only with a wicked, cunning, and designing priesthood, but also with the long-cherished and deeply-rooted opinions of a superstitious people, we cannot but see, that they were raised up by the Lord for the work of their day, and were endowed with a wisdom and strength which man does not possess in himself. But however great and many those benefits were, and however dear the memory of those valiants must be to the lovers of truth, it must nevertheless be confessed that their reformation was not perfect. They were as pioneers, by whom the way was

opened for further reformation, and some of the obstacles to the introduction of pure Christianity removed. And whilst we see very much in their work which indicates the assistance of a higher power, we must also perceive very much interwoven in their systems of theology, which originated in the wisdom and will of man. Whilst they opposed papal authority, hierarchs arose from their own body, who exercised dominion over the people's faith; so that Christ was not fully acknowledged as their immediate governor. And the glory of the reformation, thus tarnished as it was, lost still more of its lustre as the Protestant church increased its numbers, and Roman principles again appeared in another garb, both in doctrine and government. "The Jesuits," says Mosheim, "and other votaries of Rome, artfully made use of the ambiguous terms and intricate sophistry of the ancient schoolmen, in order to puzzle the Protestants and reduce them to silence, when they wanted such arguments as were adapted to produce conviction. And therefore many Protestant doctors thought it might be advantageous to their cause to have the studious youth instructed in the Aristotelian philosophy as it was taught in the schools, that thus they might be qualified to defend themselves with the same weapons with which they were opposed." Never did the reformers so give their opponents the vantage ground, as when they sheltered themselves beneath the wing of Aristotle, and trusted to the wisdom of man. This was the error which led to the apostacy: this was its very life and support. And the false

church knew well how to wield a weapon, which was worse than useless in the hands of the reformers in defending the simplicity of the Gospel. The Gospel stands in need of no such helps, but is cumbered by them. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the earth, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence."¹ Through trusting to "philosophy and vain deceit,"² the work of the reformation, if not spoiled, was greatly marred, and the church stood still, when it should have pressed forward to the fulness of the Gospel of Christ. Men became bewildered in the intricacies of sophistry, and whilst they strenuously opposed Romish notions and superstitions, they were divided among themselves by notions and superstitions of their own: resting in man's wisdom, they sought to explain the mysteries of the Gospel so as to be intelligible to carnal minds; and splitting hairs in doctrines, they were soon separated into sects, and a man, according to his eloquence and power of persuasion, drew after him a company, which, but too generally, was more anxious to follow him through all, than to labour after an individual union with Christ. And

¹ 1 Cor. i. 20, 27—29.² Col. ii. 8.

thus instead of raising a barrier against the principle, which gave rise to Popish tyranny, although externally opposed to it, they in reality stood with its votaries in opposition to the full emancipation of man from spiritual bondage: and although they were made instrumental in removing some of the obstructions in the way of the church, they neither brought her out of the wilderness, nor entirely divested themselves of the garments of Mystery Babylon. The reformed church savoured too much of human wisdom; human policy too generally directed its movements, and human power too generally enforced its rights. Not only doctrinal, but practical errors marked, what is called the progress of the Reformation, and there was as bitter a spirit of persecution among Protestant sects as there existed in the Papal church against them; and not knowing what spirit they were of, they were ready to bring down fire from heaven upon all who refused to receive them. Yet this partial reformation was regarded as perfect, and the children of the reformers, instead of living in the spirit of their fathers, rested in their work, and soon sunk into a state of apathy, in possession only of the name of Protestants.

CHAPTER V.

THE EARLY FRIENDS.—THE REFORMATION INTRODUCED BY THEM.—MODERN DEPARTURE FROM ANCIENT PRINCIPLES.—ADDRESS TO FRIENDS.

BUT the minds of men being aroused to a spirit of inquiry, and awakened to a sense of existing corruptions, were not easily settled: and hence sect upon sect arose, and the Romish church, proud of its supposed unity, pointed with delight to the divisions among its opponents. These things would have led to the expectation, that a time would arrive when a more glorious light would arise upon Zion, and the Gospel be preached in the simplicity and power of early days. And this, it is believed, was the case when George Fox was raised up in the seventeenth century, after Europe had been long embroiled in religious controversy, and when the minds of many were turned not only from the Catholic superstitions, but also from the more refined formularies, in which the Protestant church was resting. According to William Penn: "He was descended of honest and sufficient parents, who endeavoured to bring him up, as they did the rest of their children, in the way and worship of the nation; especially his mother, who was a woman accomplished above most of her degree in the place where she lived. But from a child he appeared of another frame of mind than the rest of his brethren; being more religious, inward, still, solid and observing

beyond his years, as the answers he would give, and the questions he would put upon occasion, manifested, to the astonishment of those that heard him, especially in divine things." This humble man soon became dissatisfied with the nominal professors of his day : his soul had been kindled with a higher flame, and been led to see a higher standard. He was unacquainted with the Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy : the Bible was his companion and the Spirit his interpreter. At first, ignorant of that power, which was working in him, which brought him very low, which separated him not only from gross sins, but also from communion with false professions, and which opened to the eye of his mind the truths of the everlasting Gospel, and showed their difference from mere creeds and formularies,—at first ignorant of this power, he applied to men for that rest for which he longed, and for that healing of which he felt the need : but the priests and the Levites could do no more than look on him and pass by : then Christ revealed Himself to him, and bound up his wounds.

He was led to the belief, that man by wisdom cannot know God, nor call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit, nor become acquainted with the things of God but by the same power. Of this the confused state of the Christian world, one sect crying one thing, and another crying another, appeared to be a practical illustration. So that he was brought to seek the source of truth, as being that alone which could open to his mind the doctrines of Christ, or confirm him in their reality. And when sent to preach the Gospel, the object of

his mission appeared to be, not to direct men to Christ Jesus, as to a Saviour whose sacrifice rendered needless any other condition of salvation, but to Him as the risen, glorified, and omnipotent Head of the church,—to the revelation of Jesus Christ in their own souls as the only way to life and light and peace;—to Christ revealed, not by books nor by men, but by the Father in heaven,—revealed in their souls as their wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, by making them really sanctified, righteous and wise; not by imputing to them those states, found in Christ without them, whilst they remained as inwardly corrupt and separate from the wisdom and righteousness of God as before. And with authority he called those, who had been scattered in a dark day to the hills of vain superstitions and empty professions, to come and know the realities of the Gospel, that each might know Christ for himself, and have the living water given, and springing in him a well of water unto everlasting life?¹ And many, who had been under the same preparing Hand, that framed George Fox a vessel for His praise, gladly and quickly responded to the call: many, whose hearts had longed to know what they could not find in the lifeless ministrations of different denominations of that period, whose souls were hungering and thirsting after true living bread and living water, and found no satisfaction in the “pictures of bread,” which the wise teachers presented to them, joyfully listened to his ministry, and confessed that it was the Gospel

¹ John, iv. 14.

preached with Gospel power, and having themselves come to the experience of its truth, could say with the Samaritans of old, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is the Christ the Saviour of the world."¹

Fully confiding in the promises of God, and believing in the reality of His presence, the early Friends were made willing to leave all and follow Him. By walking in the steps of Abraham, they manifested themselves to be his children, and possessors of his faith. The fruit of their faith was undeviating dedication of heart to the cause of Christ. Whilst the various professors of their day, with rare exception, either truckled to the dominant power, or for fear of its authority, hid themselves, and for a time performed their religious rites in secret, fearing men rather than honouring God, those valiants for the truth, knowing the Rock of Ages to be underneath, and the arms of Infinite Power to be round about them, stood like a bulwark against ecclesiastical tyranny and civil oppression. They were freed by the Holy Spirit from the fear of men, and offered themselves and their all a reasonable sacrifice unto Him, who had revealed Himself to them in the brightness of everlasting love: and when they went by the power of living faith, in the face of a frowning soldiery and a scoffing mob, to bear an open and practical testimony to their allegiance to Almighty God, they took their lives in their hands, ready to give them up for their Saviour's

¹ John, iv. 42.

sake. Principle was made the ground of action. The will of God was their standard, from obligation to which they believed it was not in the power of any inferior being to liberate them. This unpromising view of moral and religious duties gave a character to their lives, and had an influence in leading them to conclusions respecting points of doctrine, different from what then generally prevailed. They took the declarations of Scripture as they found them, and neither explained away the promises of Christ to the church, nor, because they found her so fallen from grace as almost to have lost the mark of Christ, referred them to a future period; so that instead of endeavouring to reduce the requirings of God to suit the condition of an apostate church, they strove to arouse her from her lethargy, that she might see what those requirings really were and become obedient to the faith; that she "might be presented to Christ a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and without blemish."¹

The principal feature of the doctrines which the early Friends were raised up to preach, was that Christianity was a *practical* and not a *notional* religion. In their belief the Gospel had been spoken of as the last days,—the last and everlasting covenant; and although they found the church gone from this covenant of light and life and truth, they felt it to be their duty to press after a realizing sense of the promises made by the Lord,

¹ Eph. v. 27.

through His ancient prophets, and by Christ himself, and which the Scriptures abundantly testify to have been experienced and enjoyed by the early church. Believing, therefore, in the *continuance* of immediate and perceptible spiritual influence, they *practically* acknowledged *Christ* as their head. How wonderfully simple was the faith, and how un-staggering was the reliance on the faithfulness and truth of a covenant-keeping God, which prompted them to sit together in silence to wait upon Him, in humble reverence, to hear what He would say to His dependent children; to know Israel's Shepherd, who promised to be in the midst of two or three gathered in His name, going in and out among them, bearing the weak in His bosom, feeding the hungry, and causing the weary and thirsty soul to rest in the green pastures and to drink of the water of life! The great doctrine of regeneration also formed a prominent part of their ministry; a regeneration not consisting of a partial change, but of a real, inward, and entire conversion of the whole soul; so that there might be a new creation in which God alone might be worshipped and obeyed. This necessarily struck at the root of the doctrine invented by the schoolmen, that Christ is the holiness of believers by imputation, against which, as tending to licentiousness, and to the subversion of the very purpose of the Gospel, they had a testimony, and urged men to seek to know the Lord to become their righteousness in reality, by working mightily in them by his Spirit, and raising them from the *power* of sin, as He had offered

himself a sacrifice for its penalty. Comprehensive, simple, and practical in their faith, dedicated in their lives, and sanctified in their hearts, they stand as a people never surpassed in the annals of ecclesiastical history since the days of the apostles. And their views of the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, and of the exalted purity which it inculcates, are now, after just two centuries, gradually gaining ground in the world, and many are found scattered up and down who, without any external communication with Friends, have been led to embrace similar opinions.

But will they who have been convinced of the same principles find in the bosom of the posterity of those valiants the same comfort, and enjoy with them the same Christian fellowship, as the hungry and thirsty of days gone by found in their meetings and society? Or is *our* gold too become dim, and our most fine gold changed? And is it true that the spiritually-minded, who have been coming toward us, have been driven from us by our want of life, or having in some instances united themselves to us, settled down into the same state of apathy? Whilst it is consolingly believed that there are many whose only desire is that they may evidence their faith and love by obedience to the requirings of their Lord, and so follow our worthy predecessors in the way of righteousness, as they followed their divine Master, that they may grow up to the fulness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus; yet it is too evidently marked on the children of this people generally that they do

not know God as their fathers knew Him, nor stand on the Rock of Ages as they stood on it. O professing Friends of this day ! be willing to examine yourselves ; see how you stand ; see in what degree you are bearing those testimonies respecting the Gospel which were given to your fathers to uphold ; see if the ensign which they bore be not furled, and if the light which shined upon them be not forsaken, by some amongst us for the world's wisdom, by others for the world's riches, and hid by some amongst us, in whom a fear would seem to exist lest a ray should strike on the still benighted Christendom, and make known what the Quakers' light really is. It is believed, that the truth will be stated, when it is said that there are many holding external communion with us, who are not attached to our principles, but, on the contrary, are opposed to them ; who being built up in notions of Christianity by the wisdom of man, shrink from the clear and unequivocal testimonies to the truth, which are still occasionally to be heard amongst us. There are others who, whilst deeply attached to our views, are afraid to speak out our true sentiments, lest a misrepresentation should follow, and doctrines never believed should be stated as forming part of our faith. There are others who have the principles, the boldness, and the faith of the early Friends. But how many there are who would smooth the words of these, and, from a pretended kindness for Christians of other denominations, do away with those things which are called asperities, because sentiments are condemned which we as a

people believe to be unscriptural, and therefore have refused to acknowledge! But if it be true that we have had entrusted to us peculiar testimonies, where is the asperity in supporting them, even although in doing so others may appear to be condemned? If testimonies have been given us to bear, we must uphold them, even although thereby minds already unsettled should entirely separate from us, even although the consequence should be not only the loss of the *world's* esteem, but the esteem of those also who call themselves Christians. But in reality nothing is more likely to bring on this people the contempt of all, than that spirit of misnamed charity which would compromise our principles that all may be pleased. If peculiar testimonies have not been given us to bear, why do we remain a distinct people?—Why are the manner of holding our religious meetings and our general conduct permitted to give the lie to our secret sentiments? There can be no doubt that the principles of Friends and the whole of their religious engagements *are peculiar*. That word is not used as though the peculiarities of Friends were not the peculiarities of the Gospel of Christ; for it is believed that they are, and that their foundation is the will of God, both formerly and immediately revealed. That they are not peculiar to other sects, is because these have not so fully come to the privileges and realities of the Gospel, as were they through whom those privileges and realities were revived after the apostacy. Far, very far, be it from us to have a want of charity towards others; far be it from us to condemn them because they have not

seen with our light. It is not this that is pressed on Friends. But it is wished to draw their attention to *their own* standard, that they may stand by that, and not lower it in the least, for all the frowns of ignorance and all the calumny of opponents. To his own master every man must stand or fall, and be judged according to what he has, and not according to what he has not. Much has been committed to us as a people, and much will assuredly be required at our hands.

Would then that we may be induced to turn for a little season and to consider whence we have fallen ; that our mouths may be put in the dust ; that we may humbly and patiently wait to know what the Lord will say to His backsliding people. The testimonies which were given to our predecessors, are too high, too holy, too pure ever to be permitted to fall to the ground. And if in His infinite wisdom the Lord should permit a dark cloud yet to gather around the professing Christian world, and the Society of Friends refuse to do their part in the church of Christ, *another* people will be chosen, and they will be left to that which they have preferred, even to *notions* of truth with the love of the world, for the *reality* of truth with the contempt of men. Although it shall be a truth to the end of time, as it has been a truth from the beginning, that He, "who lifteth up His hand to heaven and saith, I live for ever," will work and none shall let it ;—although it shall eventually be manifested, that His counsel and His will are being accomplished, notwithstanding the opposition of the enemy of His kingdom, and the wickedness

of men, who shall be made instruments, though contrary to their will and intention, in bringing His work to that consummation, when the privileges of the Gospel shall be universally known;—although this be true, awful responsibility rests on them, who hinder the coming of that day by *unbelief* or by *the fear of men*. The mighty works of Christ were not wrought formerly among some in Judea “because of their unbelief.” Unbelief in them closed up the way against divine power, and although Christ would have gathered them, and wept because they refused to be gathered, they were notwithstanding scattered. So unbelief in this day, although it cannot prevent the completion of God’s will, may and does close up the way against the operations of the Holy Spirit, and causes the church to remain in a mournful garment of widowhood, when she should be as a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid, and the joy and resort of all people.

If the Society of Friends ever take their proper standing in the church, it must be by recurring to their ancient principles and coming to the ancient foundation. Not that the mere *preaching* of those principles or the mere *profession* of that foundation will be sufficient to restore them; but the preaching must be with “power and demonstration of the Spirit,” by men of Christ’s own choosing and qualifying; the profession must be accompanied with the inward knowledge and possession of the truth. The church of God has been scattered, divided, and cast down by human wisdom working

in its own way, where and when it ought not. And many whose eyes have been opened to see the desolations of Zion, and whose hearts have been tendered to weep over her ruins, think to rebuild her by that instrumentality, which caused her to fall, and stones hewn by man's device are brought to fill up the gaps which they behold. There is too much excitement and too great an unwillingness to seek after that quiet and deep prostration of soul before the Lord, for His will to be known or His work to be done in His own way and strength. This excitement and want of quiet possession of soul are keeping many awakened minds in doubt and perplexity, are kindling in others an injudicious zeal, which will work to no other end than its own destruction, and many who would otherwise be instruments in the Lord's hand to build in His way and time, are made by them destroyers of His building, or raisers of that on a sandy base, which must fall. It would be well then for many to attend to the good old exhortation and "*Be still;*" be still that the Lord may work, prepare His own instruments and appoint servants in His own house; be still, whilst the Lord's hand is on the clay, lest the work be marred; be still, that the Lord's voice may be heard and His will known; that thus they may neither, on the one hand, put from them the Lord's work, nor on the other endeavour to do His will in their own way, that thus they may become "*a branch of His planting, the work of His hands, that He may be glorified.*"

APPENDIX.

ON SILENT WAITING AND PRAYER.

It has often appeared a very strange thing, that the practice of Friends in their religious meetings, where they assemble in silence, should appear so little understood by other Christian professors: but it has seemed yet more strange, and in a very especial manner to indicate the low state of this people to hear members of the Society itself speaking of their silent meetings, as though they neither understood nor enjoyed them, and as though the ministry of men was that alone for which they were waiting. A few remarks on this subject do not appear altogether foreign to the doctrines vindicated in the foregoing pages. For the practice of silent waiting originated, first, in a sense of man's insufficiency of himself to know, or even to seek after God, and, secondly, from a belief in the continued immediate and perceptible operations of the Holy Spirit; and from a faith that He who died for us is given to be "Head over all things to His Church,"¹ and therefore that He, and He alone is to be acknowledged, not verbally only, but practically, as the Governor of His people, and the Director of their worship. Sufficient perhaps has been already said

¹ Eph. i. 22.

respecting the priesthood of Christ and the points of doctrine connected with it, viz. His immediate and continued work in the church,—His being the alone Mediator between God and man,—of His being that Prophet, which all men were to hear, and who yet speaketh from heaven,—of the universal agency of the Holy Spirit, and of His especial presence in the church, which is gathered in Christ Jesus. We may, however, recall to mind the order of the churches, as set down by the apostle, "*Ye may all prophecy one by one*, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."¹ This is opposed not only to the practice, but to the very system of all stated ministry, and to the exaltation of one man above the others, as the sole teacher. The above was written to the Corinthians, who, although the subjects of immediate revelation, were only babes in Christ, and had not manifested true wisdom in the use of those gifts which they had received of God, so that great confusion had been introduced into their assemblies by an unquiet spirit, which could not separate the reception of a revelation from the necessity of proclaiming it: thus, when they came together, every one of them had a psalm, had a doctrine, had a tongue, had a revelation, had an interpretation. The apostle forbids these premeditated offerings in the church, although that which was offered originally sprang from the Fountain of Life. But his commandment was, "If anything *be revealed* to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace."² Thus it appears that the meetings of the early Christians were to be regulated by immediate revelation. From this it is also evident, that there was a plurality of speakers in the early assemblies of the church, and that none

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 31.² 1 Cor. xiv. 30.

was excluded from the ministry. It is difficult to see how this could be without intermediate silence. It may be said, the arrangement was premeditated ; but this would bring them into that state, which the apostle reprobates, one coming with a psalm, one with a revelation, &c., whilst the immediate revelation to one sitting by must be altogether restrained. At this distance of time, it is perhaps impossible to know the precise order of the Christian churches in the days of the apostles ; we can only be led to form an idea of it by general facts recorded in Scripture, and by the doctrines of the Gospel.

Let us consider the doctrine of Christ's priesthood, already mentioned, and further, the doctrine of the priesthood of believers alluded to by Peter, "Ye are built up a spiritual house, a holy *priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,"¹ and also by another apostle, in the new song sung before the Lamb, "Thou hast made us unto our God, kings and *priests*, and we shall reign on the earth."² Let us also remember the doctrine mentioned by Paul as the privilege of the new covenant: "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know me from the least unto the greatest,"³ to which also another apostle appears to allude: "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you."⁴ We seem constrained to admit that these and other doctrines relating to the government of Christ, and the teachings of the Spirit, all strike at the very root of a system which appoints man as a head in the church, and to be entirely opposed to the principle in which that

¹ 1 Peter, ii. 5.² Rev. v. 10.³ Heb. viii. 11.⁴ 1 John, ii. 27.

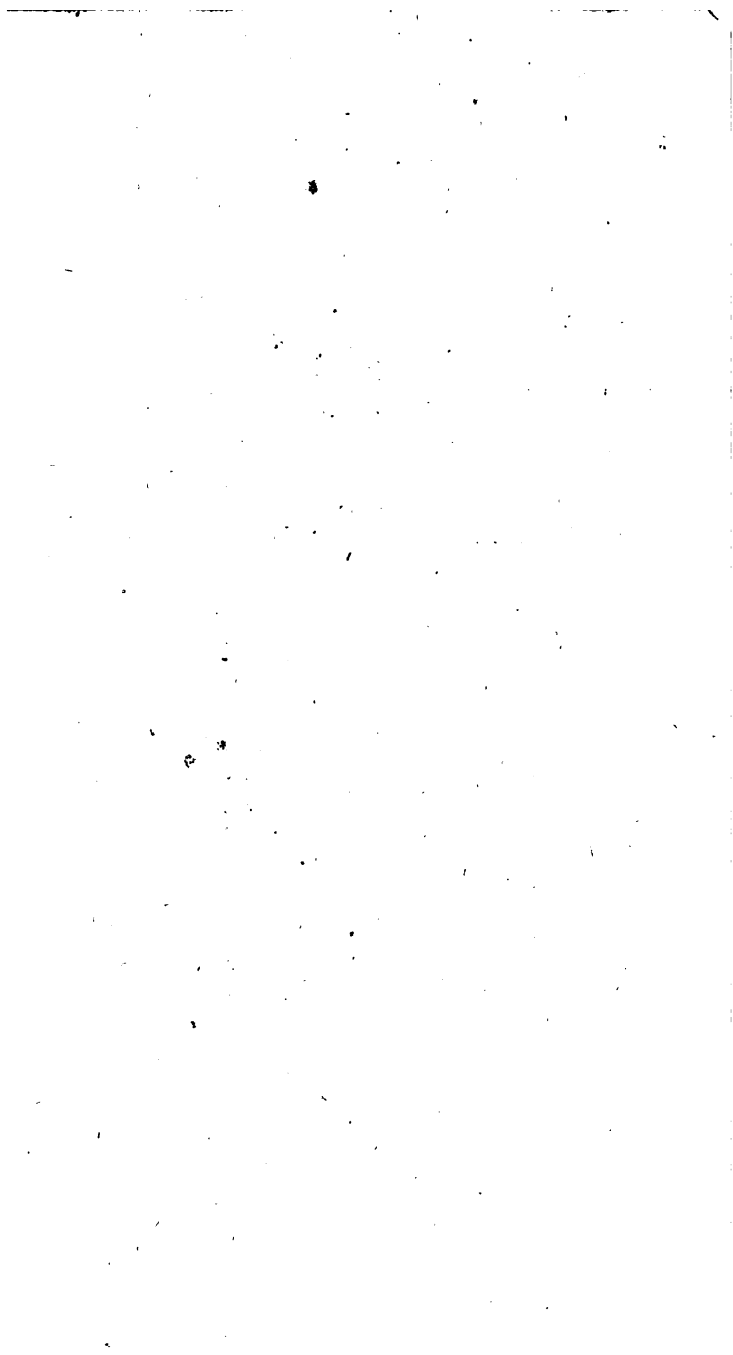
system originates. For if each member of the church is a priest, what right has man to establish a human priesthood, to which alone the office and power of priests are attributed? If every member has an anointing of the Holy One, so that being taught of God, he does not need man's teaching, on what principle does human policy assume to itself the work of the Spirit, and appoint "some apostles, some teachers," &c. ? If Christ is head over all things to His church, if the government is upon His shoulders, why do men usurp His place and power, and enter on their religious rites without waiting to feel His presence, and to receive intimation of His will ? It is believed that considerations of this kind, under a deep sense of man's impotency, and also of the corruption of the church, and of the shadowy and unsubstantial teaching, which was heard from self-called and men-appointed ministers of their day, led the early Friends to adopt the practice of waiting in silence upon God. Thus they practically disavowed human authority in the church, expressed their faith in Christ's exaltation, and thus manifested their belief, that God would fulfil His promises, and become their teacher. There is no enthusiasm here,—no mysticism,—nothing beyond the comprehension of the simplest child in Christ, and nothing unworthy the most exalted attainment.

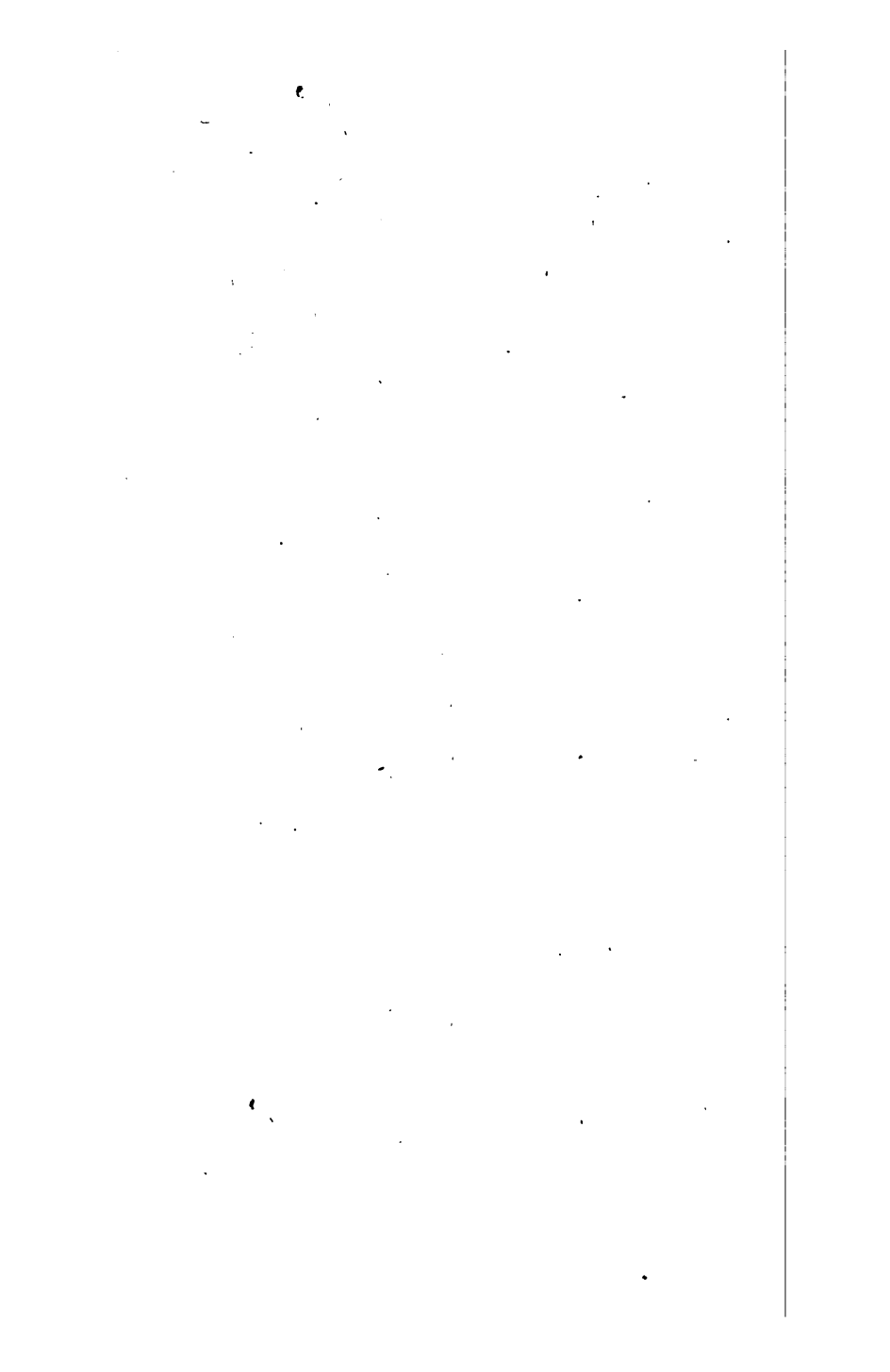
There are some who speak of silent waiting as opposed to prayer; but in true silent waiting is the *very power and spirit* of prayer. Here the soul is bowed before God, its spiritual eye is turned towards Him, its wants are laid open before Him, the hands are stretched towards Him, and the knees are bowed at His throne. There is no need of words to express

this sense. God knows the voice of the Spirit; He sees its longing; He hears its cry; He knows and acknowledges that prayer, which ascends with acceptance before Him, though unheard by man. It is true, that there is a silence, which is the silence of death, although it may be under a "semblance of high spirituality:" but there is also a silence in which the living soul pours out itself before God in true adoration. It is well said by Monro, "The prayer of the pious soul is not clamorous." Deep in its sense of the Omniscience of God and of His abounding mercy, and also of its own unworthiness and ignorance of its own necessities, the quickened spirit is frequently bowed down before the Lord, and without words its heart says unto Him, "Thy will be done." And is not this prayer? Whilst there is a prayer without words, so there may be the use of words without prayer. The error of supposing silent waiting as something *distinct* from prayer, arises from a confused and carnal notion respecting it. Prayer, when verbal, is the external expression of the secret longing of the soul. If the words uttered be not in accordance with that inward state, the petition is a mockery and a lie. How many there are, who, from an incorrect notion respecting prayer, are anxious to use words, and thus saying more than they feel, are led into formality, and lose the spirit of prayer! There is a watching unto prayer, without which the mind is apt to run into words without meaning, and to the expression of petitions, which it feels no desire should be answered. This watching unto prayer appears to be that silent bowing of the soul before God, by which the mind becomes staid on Him, and the shackles of the world

are put off, that the eye of the soul may be singly directed towards the Lord, and a true cry be uttered before Him. Surely he, who is come to this, is not ignorant of prayer.

THE END.







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